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# The Effects of Project-Based Learning in the Intermediate World Language Classroom

Steven Tanner Tucker

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THE EFFECTS OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN THE INTERMEDIATE WORLD LANGUAGE  
CLASSROOM

by

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, Alice and Randolph Craven, thank you for loving me and encouraging me to always achieve my goals. I could not have done any of this without your constant wisdom and support.

To Guillaume, I wouldn't be who I am today without you. Thank you for being a constant source of motivation.

To my friends, who will always be my close family, thank you for standing by me and supporting me through this process.

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To my French students and Teacher Cadets, thank you all for allowing me the opportunity to share my passion with you. You have all been my motivation for the last twenty years.

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## ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this action research study was to further examine the reluctance of intermediate language learners in speaking production in their second language. Additionally, with emerging strategies such as project-based learning, the study explored the efficacy of this strategy, specifically in terms of the students' volition and motivation to produce the spoken language during classroom activities. The goal was to assist educators in discovering new social and constructivist techniques that could potentially foster student engagement and language acquisition, especially in regard to speaking competencies in the foreign language. Undoubtedly, action research was the appropriate method for the current study, as it positively contributes to the discovery of perceptions and can engage professionals in the study of quality teaching methods that contribute to student learning. This study examined the current literature, analyzed the benefits of project-based learning in the world language classroom, examined student perspectives of the process, as well as examined the level of engagement and students' interactive speaking skills during the related activities. Based on key findings, recommendations were made to assist world language instructors in their attempts to further enhance the world language curriculum by implementing strategies that could potentially lead to further advancements in student engagement and language acquisition.

*Keywords:* language acquisition, project-based learning, world languages, interactive skills

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
Preface.....	vi
List of Tables .....	viii
List of Figures .....	ix
List of Symbols.....	x
List of Abbreviations .....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Problem of Practice.....	2
Purpose of Study.....	4
Positionality.....	5
Research Design.....	8
Context.....	9
Participants.....	10
Theoretical Framework.....	10
Significance and Limitations .....	14
Organization.....	15
Definition of Terms.....	16

Chapter 2: Review of Literature .....	18
Theory in Language Acquisition .....	21
History and Development of Foreign Language Curriculum .....	23
Cultural Connections in Language Learning .....	25
Experiential Learning.....	29
Constructivism in Current Practice .....	30
Definition of Project-Based Learning .....	32
Conclusion .....	42
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	44
Implementation of Project Based Learning .....	52
Data Collection Instruments for RQ1 .....	54
Data Collection Instruments for RQ2 .....	56
Data Collection Methods .....	57
Data Analysis for RQ1 .....	60
Data Analysis for RQ2.....	62
Triangulation of RQ1 and RQ2.....	63
Ethical Considerations .....	64
Conclusion .....	65
Chapter 4: Findings and Results .....	67
Data Collection Sequence .....	68
Data Collection for RQ1 .....	69



Quantitative Results .....	70
Qualitative Findings.....	72
Triangulation of RQ1 Findings.....	85
Data Collection for RQ2 .....	87
Quantitative Results .....	88
Qualitative Findings.....	91
Triangulation of Findings for RQ2 .....	109
Links to Research Questions and Overall Triangulation .....	110
Conclusion .....	112
Chapter 5: Action Plan and Implications for Future Practice .....	114
Action Research Study Premise.....	114
Overview .....	115
Discussion of Findings and Major Points .....	117
Suggestions for Future Research .....	124
Conclusion .....	128
References.....	131
Appendix A: Lesson Plan .....	146
Appendix B: Interactive Speaking Rubric A .....	155
Appendix C: Interactive Speaking Rubric B .....	156
Appendix D: Pre-Assessment Reading for Lesson.....	158
Appendix E: Pre-Assessment Activity.....	160

Appendix F: Student Reflection Form .....	161
Appendix G: Student Engagement Survey .....	162
Appendix H: Focus Group Questions .....	163
Appendix I: Invitation Letter .....	164

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Student Demographic Information for Focus Group .....	57
Table 4.1 Examples of Idiomatic Language Use .....	76
Table 4.2 Examples of Colloquial Language Use .....	81
Table 4.3 Examples of Abbreviated Colloquialisms .....	83
Table 4.4 List of Student Responses .....	101

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Data Analysis Procedure .....	46
Figure 3.2 Procedure for Analysis of RQ1 .....	60
Figure 3.3 Procedure for Analysis of RQ2 .....	62
Figure 4.1 Overall Results for Student Engagement Survey .....	88
Figure 4.2 Results of Student Engagement Survey for Sense of Value.....	89
Figure 4.3 Results of Student Engagement Survey for Overall Engagement.....	89
Figure 4.4 Results of Student Engagement Survey for Problem-Solving .....	90
Figure 4.5 Results of Student Engagement Survey for Awareness .....	90
Figure 4.6 Individual Results of Student Engagement Surveys .....	91
Figure 5.1 Action Plan.....	119

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language
AP	Advanced Placement
BI	Buck Institute for Education
DVR	Digital Voice Recorder
ELL	English Language Learner
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organization
ILT	Learning Time
ISLA	Instructed Second Language Acquisition
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
L3	Third Language
PjBL	Project Based Learning
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SCFLTA	South Carolina Foreign Language Teachers' Association
SLT/L	Second Language Teacher and Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
WL	World Language

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Interaction and effective communication are a vital part of the curriculum in second language (L2) acquisition, and the ability to develop these competencies is at the core of language learning (Norris, 2009). The capacity to maneuver through social situations in an academic or real-life setting while employing authentic language is the goal of nearly all language learners. Furthermore, there is an undeniable liaison between students' speaking participation in the classroom and their academic success (MacIntyre, et al., 2011). In addition, the linkage between students' classroom oral participation and academic achievement is undeniable. Studies have shown that students who are comfortable and confident in their production of language, regardless of explicit correctness, perform better not only on oral assessments, but also in other skill sets such as listening and reading comprehension (Turner, 2010).

Throughout my teaching career, having taught all levels of French, from French I to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) French, I have experimented with numerous techniques to incite students to speak the target language. One of the largest challenges that I have encountered is students' reluctance to produce the language in the classroom setting. Although over the years I have discovered techniques that have improved students' overall ease and confidence when producing language, I have found that intermediate French students, most notably students who are entering a French III or IV course, are more concerned with the overall correctness of

their language, and are less inclined to attempt to speak, whether formally or informally, in the classroom setting.

Having studied socio-constructive techniques during my master's program, I began experimenting with certain activities, especially project-based learning (PjBL), and noticed numerous benefits when guiding students to explore cultural themes. Specifically, I observed notable improvements in engagement, enthusiasm, and willingness to speak. This fueled my ambition to transition from traditional practices, as I explored social constructive techniques through project-based learning (PjBL). I was particularly interested in International Baccalaureate courses, where the curriculum is based on core and optional themes including social relations, cultural traditions and practices, sports and leisure, and the power of the media. All of the aforementioned led themselves well to PBL techniques, as, with the advancement of technology, artifacts and sources are readily available and varied.

Given success with PjBL techniques in these courses, I began to consider the lack of PjBL use in lower-level and intermediate courses. This led to the realization that I should further explore the meaning behind attitudes and perspectives of PjBL among students, and how implemented PjBL activities could aid in the production of speaking skills in the target language.

### **Problem of Practice**

The most significant challenges I have encountered throughout my career include facilitating individual and interactive speaking in language courses. Although I no longer teach lower-level courses, I have noticed that my colleagues, especially those at the middle school level, rely on the students' first language (L1) to teach certain grammar

elements, explain writing techniques, manipulate texts, and directly translate certain items for further comprehension. Consequently, the application of speaking strategies tends to require acute attention, as the students rely on prescribed vocabulary lists, direct instruction for grammar acquisition, and direct comprehension questions that only require a prescribed response. They are limited regarding the advanced production of speaking skills, and students often cannot expand when probed to offer further descriptions or elaborate on previously stated ideas. Some of the students are incapable of elaborating on responses and must constantly be probed with more specific questions to maneuver through interactive and individual speaking activities.

The most poignant problem identified is the initial lack of participation and quality of instruction upon entry in the intermediate class. Although I generally have not taught students in other courses, and am initially unaware of their abilities, it is most obvious that the majority have taken an interest in studying the language but are not accustomed to immersion techniques and activities that require language production. In a general classroom profile/questionnaire that I administer at the beginning of each semester, I inquire about why the students decided to further their language study, as well as what specific goals they attain. The majority of students respond with “I want to travel and want to learn how to speak the language.” As language teachers generally teach based on their informal analysis of student need (Tarone & Yule, 1989), I continually focus on improving the students’ speaking competencies, specifically those that require social interactions as opposed to presentational language. Understanding the apparent desire, it is my general assumption that students often welcome instruction but lack the confidence to speak the language.



## **Purpose of Study**

The acquisition of world language has proven to be an essential component in educational curricula in the United States. With a curricular framework that requires competencies of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, it is increasingly important to prepare students for a global workforce by understanding second or multiple languages, and to foster the understanding of cultures and societies that may not share the same viewpoints. Despite apparent need, the world language acquisition is not an easy task for secondary students. One essential problem that students face involves the lack of ability to produce the spoken language, even after years of coursework and instruction. With a traditional emphasis on writing, vocabulary memorization, and grammar construction, the development of oral communication skills is often neglected. Certain social and constructivist techniques, however, have proven beneficial to the study and practice of the target language (Aljohani, 2017). The background and process of language acquisition remains an acute area of study and despite its challenges, students can effectively maneuver through a target language in social situations with even a limited amount of foreign language instruction.

By focusing on PjBL in the intermediate language classroom, this study aims to examine not only the effectiveness of implementation on interactive speaking skills in the target language, but also further understand students' attitudes regarding the effects of continued practice on engagement in the language. By focusing on the overarching questions in this study, the efficacy of PjBL strategies in the world language classroom, I will be able to inform teachers on the potential strengths of PjBL, as well as to determine

how its implementation can further enhance the most commonly neglected skill set in language study. The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?
2. What are the effects of project-based learning on student engagement in the intermediate world language classroom?

According to the creed of the American Association of Teachers of French (2012), “The man who knows two languages is worth two men” (p. 2). Language and communication skills are the essence and foundation of all that is human, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills mandate that students be prepared to acquire skills that will enable them to competently function in more than one language to be competitive in a global society.

With a lack of data in the area of communicative skills in foreign language, discovering the perceptions of intermediate students to the implementation of a new strategy will allow for further understanding of its very nature, and to comprehend its true place in the classroom regarding improvement of the spoken language.

### **Positionality**

Having grown up in a lower middle-class bucolic town in rural South Carolina, I was not exposed to much culture outside the walls of the school. I was raised as a religious minority, somewhat of an aberrance considering my community environment. I attended a small university for my undergraduate studies and have since spent significant time in francophone countries and regions. I accepted my first teaching job at a rural high school at the age of 20, directly after receiving my B.A. from a liberal arts university. The student population at my first school was predominantly African

American, and over 90% were categorized with low socioeconomic status. I found myself in an overcrowded classroom in a school building that was decrepit and neglected by the county and the state. Although young and somewhat naïve at the time, I found myself building relationships with the students, who were passionate and curious about other cultures beyond those they had been exposed to. Although my experience was ephemeral, I can honestly say that I learned more about teaching in this specific year than at any other point of my career. I learned the value of respect, open-mindedness, and began noticing different perspectives, and how to dispute perceived apathy with attention, empathy, and compassion.

I have since taught in a middle-class high school in Charleston, SC, whose make-up is more reflective of the high school where I attended high school. While there is a growing number of ethnic and cultural minorities within the school, I continue to view myself as a White male, whose racial identity is minimally salient. This continually poses a challenge in terms of my research, as I was born with items in my invisible knapsack (Macintosh, 2006), and although realizing my own privilege, will always carry the label of a white male, despite my passion for multiculturalism and staunch efforts to advocate for diversity. I currently have the luxury of teaching in the International Baccalaureate Program, as well as teaching elective French culture and civilization courses, where my students come from numerous backgrounds. Although I teach within a program that promotes cultural awareness, I recognize attitudes and perceptions that somewhat contradict the ideals of the program, a barrier that has plagued our school for quite some time. The courses I teach, however, lend themselves to investigation. While, I have adjusted the curricula within the courses that I teach, there is significant room for

the manipulation of activities, understanding that the core standards for World Language are very malleable.

I have always perceived speaking competency as one of the most practical and useful skills in language acquisition. Throughout my career, I have consistently considered new techniques to foster interactive speaking and adopted these strategies as an integral part of language learning. This practice stems from my belief in education as constructivist, democratic, and student-centered. Equally, I realize that, as a student, I have mostly appreciated teachers who were knowledgeable in their content area, engaged in the complexities of differentiating instruction, and adapted strategies to fit a wide range of learning styles and preferences.

Currently, as the instructor for an Honors French Culture and Civilization course, I constantly search for new ways to accommodate student needs in a competitive and fast-paced educational environment. I believe that a diverse and motivated class of learners from varying levels contributes to the unique makeup of a classroom, and that an essentialist education does not prepare students to be active members of a global community. Different modalities of instruction can reach more students, and their experiences in the classroom are based on motivation, whether fueled extrinsically or intrinsically. This research, therefore, maintained an acute focus on student interaction and engagement throughout this unique learning experience.

As the assigned teacher for the Honors French Culture course, I was the primary facilitator and researcher. I also assumed the role of a study participant, as during the implementation of the PjBL activities, I was required to embed myself into the process by constant reflection of strategies and techniques, and the design and implementation of the

project. I was familiar with most students' abilities, as ten of the twelve students had previously been enrolled in courses that I had instructed. Striving for a balance of objectivity and subjectivity, it was important to maintain reflexivity during the process, as Rallis and Rossman (2012) note the potential influence and bias that often present themselves with the insider's perspective. As I maintained passion for my content area, I was aware that my continued presence in the classroom may have impacted the research. I acknowledged these biases throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. This required me to maintain objectivity, yet holistically observe students throughout this experience. In addition, it was essential that I observed, listened, and interacted with sensitivity considering my unique role as an inside researcher. Through a democratic process, I facilitated the research and my role as an insider understanding that, as Herr & Anderson (2015) argue, it can "provide a rare emic perspective on classroom life" (p. 45).

### **Research Design**

To further investigate the effects of PjBL on interactive speaking and engagement in the intermediate French classroom, understanding that action research empowers teachers to provoke educational change (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), I employed a mixed-methods research design in the current study. This approach was the most appropriate for understanding perceptions, participation, and motivation. As Merriam (2009) claims that qualitative researchers are interested in comprehending the meanings that people have constructed to make sense of their experiences, the tool must concern understanding the participants' perspectives and motivation. Additionally, as field work is generally an ideal conduit for action research (Mertler, 2014), the setting was

extremely appropriate for investigation in the current study.

For this action research study, I used a parallel convergent mixed-method design to determine the impact of PjBL on interactive speaking and engagement. Students navigated through a small series of PjBL activities and experienced a variation of a classroom model to optimize the interactive activities facilitated within the classroom. Data collection instruments included pre- and post-assessment scores, observation field notes, student reflection forms, a student engagement survey, and semi-structured interviews through a small focus group.

### **Context**

This research study was conducted at Marshview High School (pseudonym), a public converted charter school with over 1,600 students. The school's population has become increasingly diverse over the past few years, as the school has an open-enrollment policy for students located within Charleston County. The school has an African American population of over 28%, a Caucasian population of 67%, and a growing Hispanic population of 4%. Over one quarter of the students are on free or reduced lunch, and the school offers a variety of AP/IB and Dual-Credit courses.

A large appeal to Marshview High School is the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. The program is titled "*An IB School within a School*," and the IB is known for its academic rigor and drastically changing curriculum. The research participants involved in the study were primarily students who had some contact with the IB curriculum, and at the time of the study, were enrolled in French Level IV: Culture and Civilization. This course was labeled an elective intermediate French course through the school's Program of Study, carrying a pre-requisite of French Level II.

The participants' levels of language ability in this course typically vary in this setting. As the course was deemed an elective course, it was comprised of students who possess an interest in the French language and culture. Considering the low pre-requisite for enrollment, the students speaking abilities were measured at varying levels ranging from *advanced beginner* to low advanced, as designated by ACTFL (2018). Despite the diverse range, this class allows for a unique context where students generally thrive.

### **Participants**

At the time of the research study, all participants had been enrolled in the course and exposed to the curriculum for four months. At this level, students typically have built very good rapport, are generally serious and diligent learners, and have a keen interest in language acquisition, as the French Culture and Civilization course and third year of language is above the level of high school requirement. Traditionally, a minimum of *above-average* has been met on the annual Student Learning Objective's (SLO) skill set analyses.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As a result of the observant need to strengthen communication skills in a global society over the last generation, instruction has begun to embrace a more social constructivist philosophy, which concludes that language learning is a social and interactive process during which students form new ideas founded on their current and past knowledge of the foreign language (Thomas, 2000). Fueled by notable theorists who claimed that social constructivism could only occur through dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978), foreign language learning has immensely evolved alongside other disciplines to include a focus on communication skills. Additionally, Piaget (1946) claimed that cognitive

conflict and challenges were at the heart of social constructivist techniques. Social constructivism offers further explanation for how language learning can be promoted through social and interactive teaching practices, by reaffirming that learning occurs in a sociocultural environment where students are the active constructors and producers (Mitchell & Miles, 1988).

Activity Theory, created by Vygotsky and later formulated by Leontev (1981), focuses on the unified nature of human behavior, a direct result of social and cultural interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Social activity, according to Vygotsky, can be termed as a framework in the confines of which the mind is observed and studied. Leontev (1981) noted that activity involves levels, activity, action, and operations, all of which are compared to the concepts of motive, goal, and condition. It is therefore believed and widely accepted that intentions and motives emerge through social and cultural activities derived from goals and direction under certain conditions where interaction is key to language development.

Regarding language theory, researchers have continuously sought to elaborately explain how second language is most effectively acquired. Cummins (1980) extensively studied the skills necessary for acquiring a second language across a variety of contexts, dividing them into categories of frameworks adopted by school, state, and national world language organizations. Interpersonal Communication Skills (ICS) have been identified as one of the most significant forms of language competencies. Specifically, Roessingh (2006) has supported that adequate ICS requires high-functioning levels of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency capabilities.



Many theorists have valued the role of interaction in second language (L2) learning. Most notably, Krashen (1994) has been frequently recognized for the theory of scaffolding, which includes using strategies and methods that are generally slightly higher than the students' levels of capabilities. Closely related to Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, Krashen (1994) claims that educators can use a variety of authentic texts including images, pictures, and real-life stimuli to prompt comprehension. Furthermore, when L2 learners are given the tools necessary to engage in authentic interaction in the target language, students are afforded the opportunity to establish meaningful interaction strategies to express emotions and thoughts, negotiate meaning, and work collaboratively to achieve comparable goals.

Nodding (2016) affirms that constructivism is based on knowledge that is built as an overall result of student learning. When the learner constructs his own meaning of the content, this serves as a building block for additional skill development. For example, Karpov (2014) explains that children are driven by "an innate curiosity to explore the external world" (p. 6). The constructivist approach, and perhaps the current drive in foreign language teaching, maintains the grounded belief that focus should remain in the constructing of knowledge, not just its simple reception. Furthermore, language learning should further entail higher-order thinking, analysis, interpreting, production, and distorting past frameworks that regarded language learning as accumulating, memorizing, and repeating (Marlowe & Page, 2005). The approach also recognizes the significance of established personal experiences that relate to the delivered information. Although somewhat difficult, especially when teaching among multicultural populations, students must possess a basic understanding to apply these experiences to new situations, and the

role of the teacher is to activate this process by surfacing current understandings (Hoover, 1996). In addition, linking knowledge to personal experience allows for an individual relationship with the material in an innovative way that is authentic and meaningful to each student (Lee, 1995).

Project based learning, which has been implemented in a range of methods in secondary settings (Kokotsake et al., 2016), has been studied much more adeptly and has been disseminated due to efficacy on numerous academic factors including student motivation and engagement in a variety of subject areas across multiple settings. Furthermore, Ultanir (2012) claims that, contrary to former tactics that utilize essentialist philosophies, classrooms that maintain multiple features of learner-centered activities productively lead to more active engagement. According to Stenhouse (2016), social constructive techniques lead to the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in language, yet are often neglected due to the push for preparation of high-stakes testing. Despite its overshadowing as an essential classroom method, project-based learning is highly regarded as a form of situated learning, as learners construct meaning through activities grounded in real-world contexts (Krajcik & Shin, 2014).

Although much controversy surrounds the ideal teaching strategies that should be employed by foreign language teachers, social constructivism is perhaps the most mainstream approach to second and multiple language learning (Aljohani, 2017). Its theme of learner-centered instruction has dominated the foreign language classroom, continuously serving as the root of instructional development and practice. Over the last few decades, radical constructivist views have begun to organically integrate into teaching practice, such as more intricate forms of group learning, project-based learning,

and learning by teaching, a process throughout which students play the role of the instructor (Wendt, 1996).

Equally as important when closely examining constructivism is the misconstruing approaches in the classroom, and the ambiguity of the approach's framework. Although frequently referred to as learner-centered and self-directed, the role of the teacher is sometimes vaguely interpreted. Striking the balance between flexibility of the teacher and learner has become increasingly difficult, as the teacher must create an environment in which the student needs and interest are taken into consideration (Shapiro, 2002). Kompf (1996), noting the ongoing role of educators, claims that "constructivist teachers allow student responses to drive lessons, shift instructional strategies, and alter content" (p. 173). Contrarily, the teacher's role as facilitator is not limited to simple oversight, but is charged with diversifying instructional materials, enhancing environments that allow for growth, and incorporating activities that involve collaborative work and authentic tasks (Ndon, 2011). Consequently, there is an acute need for clarification and further research into what is deemed relevant and effective in terms of the constructivist's role in the foreign language classroom, as the struggle between theory and approach poses a threat to instructional practices for L2 acquisition.

### **Significance and Limitations**

This action research study is significant to language learning, as it explored and analyzed pedagogical methods that are often neglected in the world language classroom. This work, therefore, could hold potential relevance to all foreign language instructors who are interested in exploring and implementing alternative teaching models. The study will utilize foundational research behind PjBL, most notably social and cultural

constructivist techniques involved in second language learning. The results of this action research study could have an impact on the overall curriculum of world language courses that constantly endure an evolving framework based on cultural and communicative competencies. Furthermore, this study could further disrupt some of the essentialist pedagogical methods that have been labeled as antiquated and minimally effective.

In terms of limitations, this study focuses solely on the experiences of intermediate students, most of whom already maintain an interest in the French language and culture. Sampling, therefore, will not represent a large scope of attitudes and perceptions, as research indicates that intermediate students are intrigued by almost any aspect of the language and adapt very easily to a variety of pedagogical methods. Furthermore, given the diverse levels of abilities among intermediate learners in each class, the study may not reflect the progress of all intermediate learners. Additionally, time constraints could potentially pose a problem. The rapid pace of block schedules does not always allow for supplemental activities, and although the study was directly relevant to the course and curriculum, the cumbersome timeframes of PjBL activities may have inadvertently affected the natural sequencing of lessons.

### **Organization**

This dissertation includes an extensive description of the process of second language acquisition, as well as an in-depth analysis of the effects of project-based learning regarding modern language acquisition. Project-based learning is described in detail through the review of literature, which will be followed by a detailed analysis of the methodology. Elaborate discussion on methods/procedures, rationale for action research and a rich description of all study participants will follow, along with data

collection techniques and ethical considerations. A thorough analysis section will be included in Chapter 5, along with the results, interpretation, conclusions and implications for future teaching.

### **Definition of Terms**

- American Association of Teachers of French: A professional organization for French teachers in the United States that fosters the collaboration of teachers interested in the French language and culture.
- Communicative proficiency: Fluent mastery of the foreign language in different contexts of language.
- Comprehensible output: A dominant hypothesis in language acquisition that states that learning takes place when a learner encounters a gap in acquired linguistic knowledge.
- Interlanguage: A linguistic system, intermediate between a learner's native language and the target language.
- Interlanguage fossilization: A phenomenon in second language acquisition in which language learners develop and retain a linguistic system, whether learning a native language or subsequent language.
- International Baccalaureate (IB): An international education organization offering academically advanced coursework, at the end of which students may receive a course certificate or full diploma recognized for college credit by most colleges and universities.
- Language immersion: A technique used in bilingual language education during which instruction is delivered solely in the target language.

- Near-Native Proficiency: A learner's overall knowledge of the target language,
- containing relatively few non-target-language structures, that allow the learner to perform satisfactorily when interacting with native speakers of a target language.
- Project-based learning: Any programmatic or instructional approach that utilizes multifaceted projects as a central organizing strategy for educating students.
- Second language teaching and learning (SLT/L): Pedagogical aspects implicated in second language acquisition. Used interchangeably with instructed second language acquisition (ISLA).
- Professional learning communities (PLC): A professional group who works collaboratively to realize systematic goals.
- L1 (Language 1): An individual's native language, used synonymously with *mother tongue*.
- L2 (Language 2): A second language; synonymous in research literature as a foreign language.
- Instructional Scaffolding: The support given to students during the learning process, generally tailored to the student's individual needs.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of practice for this study is that world language students, in order to develop the language competencies required to be successful communicators in a second language, need to further develop the appropriate speaking skills to interact effectively. Consequently, acute attention must be paid to the application of strategies that facilitate speaking in the second language (L2). According to Savasçi (2014), while language students may participate in activities that foster skills such as reading, writing, and listening, they behave much more unwillingly to speaking in the second language. Students, therefore, do not often take advantage of opportunities in the classroom where they can effectively engage and adopt the role of active speakers, activities that could develop communication and speaking skills.

Furthermore, methodologies at the secondary level continue to entail teaching techniques that require the rote memorization of facts neglecting the higher-order thinking skills necessary for true acquisition (Mehta, 2013). Specifically, in terms of second language acquisition, teachers generally rely on methods that use the native language (L1) and employ strategies with a main focus on grammar (Hahn & Angelovska, 2017). Students, therefore, are generally not prepared for certain constructivist techniques in the classroom that require full immersion and sole use of the L2 and are generally unaccustomed to the speaking interaction required to be successful language learners.

## **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to implement project-based learning (PjBL) activities in the intermediate French classroom to discover which elements of this constructivist strategy further facilitate interactive speaking and engagement in the target language. Additionally, de Witte & Rogge (2016) claim that project-based learning has been a noted strategy to increase engagement and motivation. This study will examine the factors of project-based learning that encourage engagement and enhance engagement and motivation for students in the intermediate language classroom.

## **Research Questions**

Previous practices in world language pedagogy have not optimized strategies that lead to effective oral communication in world language courses. This study was implemented to address some of these deficiencies in strategies pertaining to language acquisition and interaction:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?
2. What are the effects of project-based learning on student engagement in the intermediate world language classroom?

## **Organization**

This chapter highlights the need of supportive literature, as well as provides a literature base for future reference throughout the study. This chapter also provides a thorough definition of project-based learning, including its theoretical début, theories of language, constructivism, and motivation, as well as the need for language acquisition for 21st century skills. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the process of PjBL, its assigned



roles, and the goals in terms of developmental skills. Specifically, regarding world language acquisition, the chapter explores literature related to the development of language skills, discussing long-term retention as well as links to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and social justice. Finally, the chapter presents literature discussing the associated challenges faced by language instructors.

### **Purpose of the Literature Review**

According to Anderson and Herr (2015), there is need for a guide to gathering and analyzing data in research, and a literature review provides the necessary conceptual framework to facilitate this process. According to Machi and McEvoy (2016), the literature review is a document that “presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study” (p. 5). It represents an intellectual progression of the field, evaluates sources, and guides the researcher to which information is the most pertinent to the study.

Despite a lack of recent literature on the effects of PjBL on world language acquisition, the literature will provide evidence and examples of strategies that have proven to be effective and reveal research that will enrich future investigation. The materials specifically selected for this chapter include articles from academic journals, textbooks, dissertations, and academic studies that either investigated aspects of language acquisition, engagement, constructivism, and/or the implementation of PjBL in the educational setting. Further investigation of the constructivist techniques yielded a stronger interest in the problem of practice, as it was apparent that, although reviewed and studied in many other specific subjects, the acquisition of world languages through PjBL was a domain that was somewhat neglected.

In terms of review strategies, primarily peer reviewed journals, textbooks, and dissertations were examined. ERIC was the primary database utilized, in addition to PyschInfo and Dissertations Global. With the influence of research suggested from colleagues, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), the literature pertaining to language acquisition and PjBL were carefully selected through comprehensive skimming, scanning, data mapping, critiquing, and evaluation.

### **Theory in Language Acquisition**

Many theorists have valued the role of interaction in L2 learning. Despite numerous available definitions of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the definition as applied to educational philosophy and applied linguistics stems from Krashen's (1985) terminology that learners subconsciously absorb and process sounds and pronunciation patterns in a target language. Krashen (1984) is frequently recognized for the theory of scaffolding and comprehensible input in the target language, by using strategies and methods that are slightly higher than the students' capability level. Closely related to Vygotsky's ZPD, Krashen (1981) claims that educators can use a variety of authentic text including images, pictures, and real-life stimuli to prompt comprehension. Furthermore, when L2 learners are given the tools necessary to engage in authentic interaction in the target language, students can establish meaningful interaction strategies, where they can express emotions and thoughts, negotiate for meaning, and work collaboratively to achieve comparable goals.

According to Krashen (1984), there have inevitably been further distinctions between second-language acquisition and language learning. Tricomi (1986) reported

that, to second-language researchers, “perhaps the most important conceptualization in the field and has made possible the most productive models of SLA” (p. 59). Krashen (1980) further explained that the hypotheses in SLA can be applicable to a variety of age ranges, and that “second language learners experience certain interactions with their teachers, native speakers of the language, and with their classmates” (p. 24).

Furthermore, the Interaction Approach claims that interaction is crucial for L2 learners, offering them numerous opportunities to discover language in context. Interaction refers to communication between individuals, particularly when negotiating means to improve communication (Ellis, 1999). Interaction naturally provides language learners with the opportunity to receive input and feedback, as well as to adapt and alter their linguistic output (Swain, 1995). According to Swain (2000), learners need to “create linguistic form and meaning, and discover what they can and cannot do” (p. 99). Krashen’s (1981) input hypothesis further parallels Swain’s hypothesis in terms of language output and claims that repeated practice in L2 positively affect spoken production. The Interactive Hypothesis states that conversational interaction facilitates acquisition due to the connectivity of internal learner capacities and language production (Long, 1996). The interaction, therefore, allows learners to perceive gaps in their language capabilities, determining their own command of the language and correct target use of the language (Schmidt & Frota, 1986). Through further recognition of gaps in their communicative functions, the students become cognizant of their role in the process of learning acquisition.

Krashen (1981), through a firm definition of acquisition, implies that genuine communication takes place for authentic purposes, when the learner has a desire for

understanding the language. Acknowledgment that certain factors such as motivation and lack of sense of belonging can inhibit acquisition, Krashen claims that input occurs optimally through non-stressful situations where inhibitions are minimal, in a low-stress environment that is conducive for free expression and interpretation.

### **The History and Development of the Foreign Language Curriculum**

A historical perspective on education reveals that implementation of foreign language promoted classical language study, as reading comprehension was the primary goal in literature comprehension. In the 1950's, following the revamping of educational systems after a decade of post-war reconstruction, regard for U.S. supremacy instigated an increase in interest for speaking foreign languages (Met & Galloway, 1992).

Instruction did not deviate drastically throughout the decade, as classroom instruction was generally structured around the same practices used in military training programs, based on stimulus-response learning theories (Crawford, 2001). Consequently, in addition to the grammar and vocabulary that were assessed on basic rules and patterns, students were required to focus on self-expression, primarily through the use of dialogue memorization and recitation.

Furthermore, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 lead to a further melting pot mentality, leading to perceived improvement in education that supported ethnic identity. The later move towards cultural pluralism, although mostly affecting students in bilingual programs, pushed the U.S. government to allocate more funds to the state level. Certain states remarked that students from other countries often outperformed monolingual students on numerous cognitive tasks and exams (Padilla, Fairchild, & Valadez, 1990). With this recognition, in the early 1970's, components were added to most language

programs and shifted focus to authentic communication and creative construction (Dulay & Burt, 1975). During that time, Met & Galloway (1992) claimed that foreign language instruction evolved past rote memory and grammatical drills, and included context, meaning, and communication in verbal forms.

The definition of communicative skills and competencies were later defined in the early 1980's, when Canale and Swain (1980) published articles that outlined the requirement for grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic abilities to be included in foreign language learning. Although there has been debate regarding linguistic competence and communicative competence in foreign language teaching, research has concluded that communicative competencies represent a superior model of language (Hery, 2017). Concurrently, with Jimmy Carter's previous support of foreign language study, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL, 2015) in 1979 identified the need for specificity in terminology and thus released its Proficiency Guidelines. Consequently, after numerous research updates, this framework remains consistent for foreign language curricula across the United States. The guidelines offer insight into the definition of competency, as well as provide detailed scales and descriptors for measuring speaking, listening and reading comprehension, speaking, and culture. Each measurement offers applicable criteria and aims to demonstrate the ideal competencies required to effectively learn a foreign language.

In response to ACTFL's standards, language curricula began to further adopt communication skills with a foundation of understanding cultural contexts. The U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment of the Humanities set out to identify standards that should be implemented in foreign language classes. Later,

interwoven with the Common Core Standards (2010) for English Language Arts (ELA) and the National Standards for Language Learning (2012), the three modes of language, including interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational, as well as levels of proficiency (beginner, intermediate, and advanced), were adopted into ACTFL's (2015) measurement for achievement. Moreover, unlike former models, the prescribed outcome was appropriate communication, as opposed to an emphasis on competently maneuvering through the language as a native speaker. Working collaboratively with ACTFL, the National Council of State Supervisors (NCSSFL) presented a list of "Can-Do Statements", through which teachers described what learners could do over time, set goals along the proficiency curriculum, set independent learning goals, and provide points for self-assessment (ACTFL, 2017).

The new 21st Century Skills Map, created in 2017 by ACTFL, is a direct result of continued investigation and feedback from agencies and educators across America. Taking into account the new technology innovations and advances in world language research, the association has adopted new standards that focuses on developed literacy and real-world applications. ACTFL's (2017) recent addendum states that students who incorporate themselves into another language and culture add to their preparation "not only college- and career-ready, but are also 'world-ready' — that is, prepared to add the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to their résumés for entering postsecondary study or a career" (p. 2).

### **Cultural Connections in Language Learning**

In the historical context of language learning, curricula have often been structured around culture. According to pioneers of language theory including Stainer (1971), the

study of culture offers students a rationale for studying the target language, to discover reasons that the target language is meaningful. By inferring that the study of grammar disassociates language from real life, Chastain (1971) confirmed that understanding culture is diminished when portraying language speakers without real-life contexts, sometimes leading students to believe that the target language examples are fictive. With the integration of cultural aspects of language, the result is access to culture and an association with real people and real places. Early tones of cultural integration led to the addendum of cultural components, with recognition from the National Standards in Foreign Language Project (1999), that claimed “the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and the vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language” (p. 43).

Despite the evolution of cultural components within content and an effort to develop a contemporary curriculum, Dema and Mueller (2012) observed apparent failures in efforts to recognize the marriage of language and culture, and claimed that although “foreign languages may be no longer taught as a compendium of rules through drills and contrived dialogues, culture is still often taught separately and not integrated in the process of foreign language learning” (p. 77).

The gaps in reconceptualization of language learning since the decades of grammar-based instruction are still apparent, and a genuine framework remains somewhat ambiguous in terms of the exact culture that should be taught. Language learning has evolved not only to a participatory process, but now requires integrated ways of expressing ideas, as well as new ways of thinking, behaving, and living a cultural experience in an L2 community (Young & Miller, 2004). Current holistic models have

further advanced the curriculum by inferring that cultural learning maintains a view of using language and cultural skills for social transformation towards equity, fairness, and creating world citizens (Borghetti, 2013). Despite interpretations of culture and the degree to which it should be infused into world language curriculum, it is a relatively mutual belief that language and culture co-exist in an L2 setting. Specifically, Brown (2007) stated that, “The acquisition of a second language is also the acquisition of a second culture” (p. 189).

Language educators attempt to engage students in deeply meaningful learning in the classroom, and often encounter struggles connecting students with language culture (Kearny, 2016). To achieve this, there must be intercultural learning in the world language classroom that reflects the dynamic nature of the target culture. Kinginger (1999) claimed that when the instructional setting is organized appropriately, language learners may surpass sole acquisition of linguistic forms, and learn to observe, discover, analyze, and interpret the similarities and differences between the target culture and that of their own. Additionally, most L2 students find themselves in a monolingual and monocultural environment, thus making it difficult to make appropriate value judgements to diverse cultural characteristics (Genc & Boda, 2005). The cultural influence of language, therefore, must be transferred not only by means of linguistic competencies, but must include a pedagogy that selects cultural content as learning (McCay, 2003).

Furthermore, there is heavy recognition that language learning, with focus on cultural components that include identity, highlight a curriculum that promotes critical thinking and supports an agency for social change. Nieto (2012) stated that language, culture, and experiences add to “a rejection of the deficit perspective that has



characterized much of the education of marginalized students, to a perspective that views all students” (p. 2). Nieto adds that, for education to be rooted in social justice, it must be responsive to the language needs of students. A result of an English-only language ideology, according to Nieto (2006), education will “strip children of their true identities” (p. 3) and will lead to disengaged learning and a fragmented sense of the students’ place in society.

In the most recent update of the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Language Teaching (ACTFL, 2015), the five C’s highlight the importance of the relationship of language and communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Going beyond linguistic abilities, the ACTFL (2015) declared that “the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language.” (p. 32). Adaptive approaches since the organization’s implementation claim capturing a language’s rich view by assuming a communicative and cultural perspective. Jabobs and Farrell (2003) recognize the implications of the shift and claim that the cultural approach has equally created greater attention to diversity among language learners. By focusing on the social nature of learning rather than on students as separate and decontextualized individuals, language learning can view cultural differences “not as impediments, but as resources to be recognized, catered to, and appreciated.” (p. 3). In disregard for the genuine culture content that world classrooms can enjoy, world language teachers have not yet embraced the interweaved relationship. According to the ACTFL’s (2015) most recent report, a surprisingly low number of teachers claim to maintain focus on the topics of Connections (11%) and Communities (8%), which completely overlooks the interdisciplinary purpose

of the standards outlined in the creed. As a result of further probing and data collection through open-ended surveys, ACTFL's (2015) report that teachers interpret these aspects to include taking students abroad, and find the goal to be nebulous, out of their control, and not assessable.

### **Experiential Learning**

The study framework included Kolb's (1981) theory of experiential learning, which includes the learner engaged in practice and reflecting upon past and current experiences (Efstatia, 2014). Through these experiences, students can connect their learning experiences to their overall endeavors and promote their own critical thinking. Kolb, further mainstreaming the works of Dewey and Piaget, states that this process is continuous, and its components are frequently referred to as the Cycle of Experiential Learning. Kolb's four components, concrete experiences, abstract conceptualizations, reflection observations, and active experimentations, are collectively referred to as the Cycle of Experiential Learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2008).

Providing this platform for optimal student learning, Kolb (1984) claims that when students are actively engaged in their learning experiences, they see the importance and relevance of their work, developing and sustaining a deeper motivation to learn. Building from Kolb's theory, later theorists emphasized the importance of engagement in student success. For example, Astin (1984) asserted that students actively engaged in the learning process are more prone to see education as a purposeful endeavor and link this ownership to greater academic success. In terms of language learning, there has been an overall positive impact of student participation and engagement on L2 achievement (Bahar, 2015; Karabiyik, 2016).

### **Constructivism in Current Practice**

Constructivism is not a new practice on the educational stage yet has gained momentum over the last few decades. Although there is no ideal construction of practice in the modern classroom (Yoders, 2014), constructivists continue to maneuver around traditional practices by fostering active engagement, problem-solving, and collaboration (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Kinshuk (2005) observed that schools remain to be structured in a traditional way, leading to the need for proven constructive practices in education. Within this, classrooms must provide a variety of activities to increase student readiness for learning, discovering new ideas, and accepting differences among the collaborative groups with whom they learn. According to Kaplana (2015), in the constructivist classroom, knowledge is constructed individually based the student's prior experience or collaboratively by participant's contribution. The overall goal is to foster complex learning situations in real life with no set solution, with the student making sense of the outcome. Knowledge is actively constructed by students' senses and experiences, leading them to naturally understandings construct knowledge.

Collaboration is the key component to development of students' abilities though multiple representations of the subject matter. Constructivism links the student to the known by assuming meaning to be a personal, individual construct rather than external to the individual and part of a mind-independent reality (Cleaver & Ballentyne, 2014). Furthermore, ownership of the student's work among social groups is the driving force of constructing knowledge (Kaplana, 2015; Savasci & Berlin, 2015). Thus, in the constructivist classroom, an environment is established that allows freedom and liberty so

that students may formulate their own opinions, can experiment, and construct knowledge on their own (Yadav, 2016).

Although there is some debate regarding the individual role of the student during constructivist activities (Alanzi, 2016), the imperatives are somewhat clear. The selection of one's own topic guides the experience and allows the student to optimize their own development and educational experience (Baken, 2014). The role of the student in constructivism is to actively participate in their own education by accommodating and assimilating new information with their own understanding. (Driscoll, 2015; Jordan, Carlile, & Stack, 2008). Furthermore, a crucial part of the process is the development of metacognitive skills, where students control their experiences by reflecting on what has been acquired and the process under which they have learned information.

The teacher's role in constructivist techniques has been referred to as that of a taskmaster, helper, and guide (Aurobindo, 2010). Constructivist teachers pose questions and problems and guide students throughout the process, allowing students to formulate their own conclusions. Constructivism calls for teachers to maintain active learning, facilitate the social context behind which students learn, and provide the authentic and collaborative types of activities that the process mandates (O'Donnell, 2012). According to Trimble (2017), it is the teachers' responsibility to relinquish some of the control of their classroom, as the teacher's role is "to question, prod, and provide resources to help the student find an appropriate solution" (p. 35), and allow their students to experience productive struggle. Through this struggle, students can learn certain skills and abilities that are associated with learning discovery, and although content is the focus of many classroom activities, these skills transcend into other domains.

## **Definition of Project-Based Learning**

Project-based learning adopts the creed that students acquire knowledge and skills through the process of an investigation on a question, problem, or challenge (Buck Institute for Education, 2017). Stemming from Dewey and Kilpatrick's progressive movement, PjBL is rooted in the concept that investigative processes that lead to authentic experiences can be realized through project methods in education (Sutenin, 2013). The fundamental concept of PjBL is that problems presented in a real-world capacity stimulate thought, as students must navigate, acquire, and apply new knowledge in this context. This approach has been reported to be widely used in a variety of classroom settings (Chiang & Lee, 2017), and its notoriety has been most significantly attributed to components that allow for interdisciplinary, student-centered, collaborative techniques that are integrated with real-world issues and practices (English, 2013).

Thomas (2000) states that project-based learning is centered in students constructing their own understanding through a goal-directed process of inquiry, knowledge building, and problem resolution. Thomas (2000) defines project-based learning with five distinct criteria: a) centrality, wherein the project is centered in the curriculum, b) driving question, wherein the technique poses a question or problem that drives the student to encounter the underlying concept, c) constructive investigation, wherein the main activities provoke students to construct new understandings, d) autonomy, during the process of which students are given the responsibility to determine outcomes, e) realism, wherein the problem should stem from real-life challenges.

In a more recent model, The Buck Institute (2013) created a guide for best project-based teaching practices encourage the transition from transitional techniques by

demonstrating that many former strategies can still be applied in PjBL. The design and plan is the choice of the student, yet remains grounded in content. According to the Buck Institute there are eight essential elements of project design, the basis for project-based learning. These essential elements are as follows:

1. Key knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills: A project should be focused on student learning goals. It should also include standards-based content and skills. These skills include critical thinking, collaboration and self-management.
2. Challenging Problem or Question: The challenge level of the problem or question should be appropriate for the student(s) working to solve it. The problem or question should also be meaningful to the student(s).
3. Sustained Inquiry: A continued process of student(s) asking questions, finding resources to answer the questions and applying the new information.
4. Authenticity: A project should contain a connection to the real world. If there is no real-world connection, there should be an impact or relationship to students' own interests.
5. Student Voice and Choice: Students should have a say in what they create and how it is created.
6. Reflection: Students and teachers both reflect on the project. What was effective? What obstacles were encountered and how were they overcome?
7. Critique and Revision: Feedback is given and received by students. It is then used to improve the project process and product.

8. Public Product: Students work becomes public through display/presentation.  
(Buck Institute, 2017).

All of these components engage students through an active learning process that demand an increased depth of knowledge and higher order thinking skills. In essence, PjBL can be described as a synthesis of various instructional components and approaches, including former models of instruction that include inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, cooperative learning, and authentic learning (Larrier et al., 2016; Galvan & Coronado, 2014).

To form an appropriate transition for teachers who are accustomed to traditional methods and strategies, recommendations suggest that teachers observe their role throughout each step of the procedure. The Buck Institute (2017), although leaving primary selection and development to the student, suggests that the teacher manage activities, delegate tasks, provide schedules and checkpoints, examine the quality and frequency of collaboration, scaffold student learning, and provide formative and summative assessments to ensure individual and collaborative competencies. Additionally, teachers are to work alongside students through the process, provide appropriate support and redirection when needed.

### **Theoretical Début of Project Based Learning**

John Dewey's (1916) basic theory that "doing is the key to understanding" further instigated project implementation, as he claims that "doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results" (p. 98). The extensive work by John Dewey (1938) continues to serve as a foundation of project-based learning, noting the discovery of the impact of experience on a child's education. Dewey (1938) recognizes that the

development of experiences is fostered through the process of social interaction, and that “qualities are realized in the degree in which individuals form a community group” (p. 58). Dewey (1959) elaborated on some of his initial beliefs, and determined that learning was an active process, and that students would be active participants in their own experiences if activities were relevant to the world around them (as cited in Krajcik & Shin, 2014).

Dewey’s theory challenged both traditional and progressive structures of education, and further sparked other instigations of the social needs behind education. Fueled by Dewey’s initial thoughts, Kilpatrick (1921) introduced the social constructivist orientation to project-learning, noting that a project should “represent a wholehearted purposeful activity of the worthy life in a democratic society, and thus the project or purposeful act is considered as life itself and not preparation for later living” (Pecore, 2015, p. 158). Future theorists who adopted Dewey’s philosophy, proposed that growth is facilitated by the meaningful social interactions, and that students make meaning through an active process (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s elaborate description of the mechanisms under which students learn to reinforce the collaborative roles in PjBL has served as the conduit for further refining of skills that enhance meaning making through social and cultural contexts (Postholm, 2015). Social constructivist theory is rooted in Piaget’s (1973) work on constructivism and was later refined by Vygostksy in the following decade (Posthom, 2015). Piaget focused on the power of language, claiming that individuals use language to make the world around them seem logical, a precursor for further senses of new knowledge (Aminceh & Asl, 2015).



## **Project Based Learning and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

Despite the many interpretations of the elements involved in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, there is much research that continues to reinforce the definition based on the four C's: communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (Wan Husin et al., 2016; Sahin & Top, 2015; Mergendoller, Markham, Ravitz & Larmer, 2006; NEA, 2019). According to Pearlman (2006), learners, through modes such as PjBL, need to be engaged in a variety of meaningful multidisciplinary hands-on activities that create a self-directed learning environment as per their needs and interest in a collaborative approach. Furthermore, the approach has also allowed students to use manipulatives in order to comprehend abstract ideas that produce positive results in partnered learning (Liegel, 2008). Consequently, the students will be better communicators, collaborators, and performers in the workplace for the society of the future. Sahin and Top (2015), who conducted a study on the effects of PjBL on STEM students, found that, apart from the academic gains, students gained knowledge outside that of the content area. Through a qualitative study, the authors used an SOS model that tested five skill groups: self-confidence, technology skills, life and career skills, communication skills and collaboration. As a result of the project, by examining the impacts of PjBL on 11 upper-level science students, Sahin and Top (2015) found that students demonstrated further skills in social and emotional gains, by concluding that students began to feel they could achieve such things as “presenting to groups, communicating with other students and people from outside, making a connection with things that happen around them, etc...” (p. 25). Consequently, the authors recommended further investigation of practices that foster the gaining of academic knowledge while concurrently developing interests in the

subject matter, as well as interest in inquiry to maximize 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Based on suggestions from the authors, further investigation on PjBL at the secondary level could lead to the discovery of practices that foster and enhance motivation.

Collaboration, one of the core competencies identified in preparing students for a 21<sup>st</sup> century work force, is one of the key elements and achieved learning outcomes in PjBL. In a qualitative case study conducted in two high school classrooms, Lee, Huh, and Reigeluth (2015) studied how collaboration can be achieved as a learning outcome, and how intra-group conflict can lead to the development of communicative and collaborative skills. Their results suggested that individual differences triggered types of intra-group conflict, and, through the process of learning activities that enhanced collaboration, emphasized that “members’ social skills as a whole was deemed more important than individual members’ social skills in management of collaboration” (p. 581). The authors noted that the appropriate use of social skills indeed generates a positive impact on collaboration, and thus, of overall productivity. The social skills required in collaboration, coupled with potential to acquire new language within those social contexts, can potentially be further explored with more thorough investigation of collaborative skills in PjBL.

According to the National Education Association (NEA, (2017), creativity and curiosity are characteristics that are teachable, and can be burgeoned in a learning environment that is structured around the PjBL classroom. The NEA (2017) recognizes the need to encourage and nurture creativity in the classroom setting and claims that “if students leave school without knowing how to continuously create and innovate, they will be unprepared for the challenges of society and the workforce” (p. 24). Further

aligning with these core competencies is the enhancement of critical thinking skills and originality, which have also been proven to be elevated as a result of PjBL (Finkelstein et al., 2010; Tamba, 2017). In a recent mixed-method study conducted by Tamba (2017), who tested the effects of PjBL on creative thinking and problem-solving skills, the researcher found that students who were taught using this method produced higher scores on creativity and problem-solving learning assessments. Employing a research design that included the random sampling and comparing conventional teaching styles and a model classroom with an incorporated PjBL approach, the researcher concluded that, comparatively, the students in the model classroom scored higher in assessments that measured elements originality, fluency, flexibility, and elaboration.

Should similar methods applied within a foreign language context also prove to be valid, the results could be equally beneficial as a component of L2 learning. Further research on the implementation of this mode in a variety of settings could, therefore, could have a direct impact on increased success rates, as well as contribute to enhanced language learning.

**Barriers in the implementation of project-based learning.** Thomas (2000) found much evidence that PjBL can indeed enhance the quality of student learning in comparison with traditional instructional methods. The various interpretations of project-based learning, however, in its initial phases, made it difficult to identify. Despite its popularity, there remains a research gap and a refined link between implementation and student achievement. In earlier implementation, in addition to the ambiguity of what strong projects entailed, educators found it seemingly difficult to fully comprehend its embedded concepts and were somewhat unclear on how to facilitate problem-solving

strategies effectively (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). As even skilled teacher progressively noticed, the lack of careful-designed tasks and structures that support PjBL, if poorly navigated, can lead to an arduous process that seems to morph a renowned practice into a series of untangled activities that seem to have no clear outcome.

More challenges have been noted throughout research, including the length of class periods and the seat time collaborative activities demand (Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018). Due to the ease and minimal time constraints of teacher-centered instruction, teachers have found it difficult to manage multiple tasks, including providing stimulation, allowing opportunities for internet research, and facilitating the chaotic perception of collaboration. Since its further definition and more elaborate description of this method's techniques, high quality project-based learning has been proved difficult to implement in the classroom for a variety of reasons. This is especially true since teachers are required to possess a deep understanding of the content being taught in addition to maintain the skills that make the content relatable to their students (Kanter & Konstantopolous, 2010). Additionally, a common theme in challenges is teachers relinquishing some control in order to allow for choice and creativity of the students while maintaining the focus of the content throughout the process (Spires et al., 2012). Paradoxically, the challenges that lead some teachers to this reluctance are also known as the reasons why educators have witnessed student growth (Edmunds et al., 2017). As the control is shifted in a structured fashion to the students, schools have met increased motivation and engagement towards learning as a result of its implementation.

Furthermore, the complex elements of PjBL have led teachers to the perception that it is a difficult process to implement. Ertmer and Simmons (2006) noted that there

were three principle domains in which educators found it difficult to implement PjBL: 1) the creation of the culture of collaboration in the classroom, 2) adjusting from the traditional teacher role, and 3) scaffolding student learning. Teachers also felt that its implementation was overly time-consuming, the classroom feels disorderly and unstructured, and that numerous authentic assessments proved difficult to design. Finding an equilibrium, especially without a lack of appropriate training in the associated technique, led to the perceived hardships involved in controlling the flow of information and student independence (Liu et al., 2012). There is an overlying recommendation that appropriate implementations will require unfamiliarity with the direction of projects, and that effective implementation of this pedagogy can indeed be achieved through the careful selection of projects that fit curricular needs, fine-tuned attention of scaffolding techniques, and a critical evaluation of grading and assessment.

Qualitative studies reporting on teacher perceptions of the implementation of PjBL have continued to emerge in the literature over the last decade. In a mixed-method study that reported primarily the qualitative components of their study, MacMath, Sivia, and Britton (2017) reported on a secondary school's teachers' perceptions of PjBL in five subject areas. Noting the results from semi-structured interviews conducted within established teacher focus groups, the authors noted that teachers flagged the need for assessment clarity, highlighting the need for ongoing and smaller formative assessment, the desire for curricular alignment among subject areas, and time allowance for the implementation of projects. They also suggest that appropriate training would benefit the incorporation of PjBL and that consideration needs to be given to supporting students with learning disabilities. Their observations and findings concluded that, despite the

challenges encountered, that teachers weighed the positive outcomes of PjBL and recognized that by moving students to the forefront of their educational experience, that this technique would make the overall product worth of their time.

In a similar study, Harris (2014) surveyed 105 teachers to determine their perceptions of the challenges of implementing PBL. During the time of the study, the school was in the early stages of its implementation of PjBL. In this qualitative study that used open-ended interviews as its primary research tool, the data on the challenges that teachers faced when implementing PjBL revealed that teachers claim that time, meeting the standards, meeting accountability expectations, and implementation within the school's schedule of design were the most challenging components. Harris (2014) noted one of the comments that incited reaction: "With so much testing and other schedule limitations, it is worrisome to add something so time-consuming and labor-intensive (p. 96). Additionally, the study revealed that meeting testing requirements was another struggle, and that outside pressures keenly influenced the educators' ability to combat the challenges associated with the cumbersome components of PjBL.

Components of standardized and high-stakes tests have also played a role in the reluctance to implement project-based techniques. With an inundation of assessments that require only one simple correct answer, teachers continue to find themselves teaching to the test (Ritt, 2016). This unfortunate revelation can strip creativity from the classroom, as teachers find themselves confined in delivering fact-based lessons that do not allow time for collaborative techniques such as PjBL. Contrarily, Hixson, Ravitz, and Whisman (2012) claim that when teachers are appropriately trained in the methods and devote more time teaching the necessary skills, students perform just as well on standardized tests than

students engaged in traditional instruction. Despite the many perceived notions that PjBL can be an impediment in certain classroom environments, if implemented correctly, and when students who take an active role in their education through methods that require them to monitor and regulate their own beliefs, they perform to a higher degree than when engaged in passive learning pedagogy (Bell, 2010). With this continuous information in current research, studying the effects of on PjBL on the intermediate language classroom could discredit some of the associated myths of implementation, and could assist in fostering organizational techniques that enhance the PjBL's efficacy.

### **Conclusion**

PjBL and world language acquisition have assumed many roles in the production of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. The study's theoretical framework incorporates an overview of theory in regard to the constructivist techniques involved in project-based learning, as well as highlights theories in second language acquisition and theory on student engagement. In this regard, project based learning has proven positive effects in terms of fostering skills associated with motivation, and has proven beneficial to students by affording them the opportunity of constructing their own understanding through a goal-directed process of inquiry, knowledge building, and problem resolution (de Witte & Rogge, 2016; Thomas, 2000; Buck Institute, 2013).

The evolution of constructivist strategies in the classroom had led to an active participation among learners, and has significantly shifted the teacher's role, further suggesting that the students, through a variety of developed skills of inquiry, discovery, and reflection, construct individualized meaning and personalized understanding (Aurobindo, 2010; Baken, 2014). In terms of language, despite an apparent gap in the

research of acquisition and constructivist techniques, requires the elements instigated by the study of a culturally infused curriculum that allows for self-discovery through cultural comparisons and the establishment of identity (McCay, 2003).

Despite numerous studies that portray the reluctance of teachers to implement PjBL in the classroom (Lui et al., 2012; Harris, 2014; Ritt, 2016; MacMath, Sivia & Britton, 2017), the potential gains involved in the technique's implementation undoubtedly merits further investigation. After years of change and adaptations within the foreign language curriculum, only 20% of the United States' K-12 students are enrolled in world language courses (Mitchell, 2017). Consequently, there is an apparent need to promote language learning, to discover and align techniques, and to provide students with the competencies required to be successful in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will fully outline the research methodology that this action research study will follow and will maintain a focus on effects of project-based learning in the intermediate-level French classroom. Understanding that action research empowers teachers to provoke educational change (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), I will employ a mixed-method design, as this type of blended paradigm is appropriate for understanding perceptions, participation, and motivation. As Merriam (2009) claims, qualitative researchers are interested in comprehending the meaning that people have constructed, thus making sense of their experience; the tool must concern understanding the participants' attitudes and motivation. Additionally, as field work is generally an ideal conduit for action research (Mertler, 2014), the setting will be appropriate for finding themes, categories, typologies, concepts, and tentative hypotheses.

Using a convergent parallel mixed-method design (Creswell, 2014), I sought to determine the students' attitudes of the components of PjBL. Students navigated through a small series of PjBL activities and experienced a model that optimized activities to be facilitated within the classroom. Field notes, observations, and a focus group were employed for qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data will be obtained by performance assessments specifically relating to interactive speaking skills and will be measured and compared throughout the course of the instructional unit (Creswell, 2014). This action research study therefore seeks to determine the effects of a project-based

learning on interactive speaking skills and student engagement, as this model is the most appropriate framework to guide the inquiry. The questions guiding this research are:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?
2. What are the effects of project-based learning on student engagement in the intermediate world language classroom?

### **Action Research**

The action research paradigm involves a process of systematic inquiry conducted by educators who wish to assess their practice and improve student learning (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Action research has distinguished itself from traditional research by allowing teachers to examine social and academic issues with which they are faced daily (Hine, 2013). Furthermore, it has been shown that action research has led to better localized teaching techniques, improved professional development, and increased educator self-concept (Mertler, 2014). Due to the metacognitive techniques and reflection components outlined in the paradigm, this type of inquiry allowed me to better understand the very nature of the classroom being studied, and assisted in future planning, the implementation of new strategies, and evaluation.

### **Convergent parallel mixed-method design**

For this study, I selected a convergent parallel mixed-method design, as the quantitative and qualitative data will first be analyzed separately and then compared. A convergent parallel design involves the researcher concurrently conducting the quantitative and qualitative elements in the same phase of the inquiry, weigh the methods equally, analyze the information independently, and interpret the results collectively

(Creswell, 2014). Aberrantly, considering that I used two qualitative instruments for the analysis of each research questions, the qualitative data for research questions were interpreted collectively, resulting in comparative analysis. Keeping in mind the importance of corroboration and validation, I analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data for each research question separately, then triangulated the results from each.

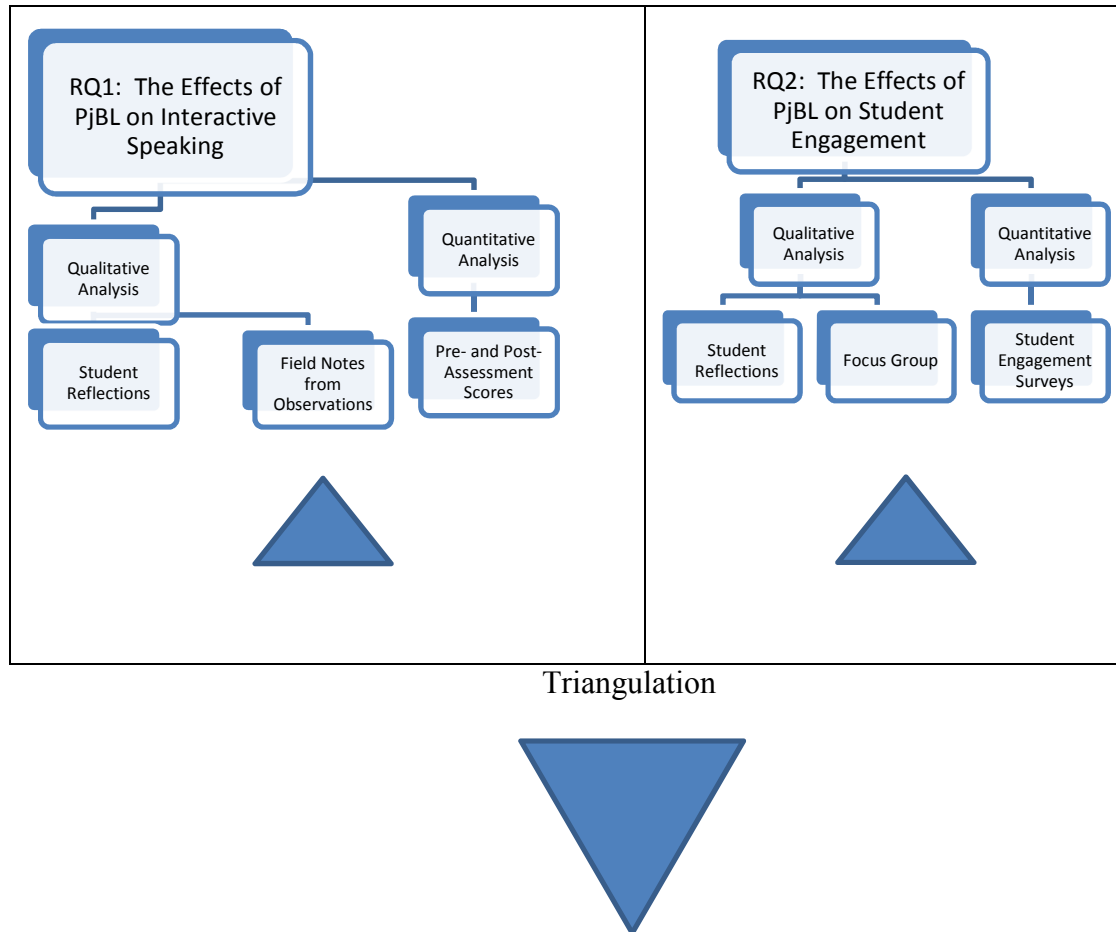


Figure 3.1 Data analysis procedure

Following traditional steps of action research: the identification of focus, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and the development of a plan of action (Mertler, 2014), I employed a mixed-method design that will merge the quantitative and qualitative data to better measure participant views, incorporate individual participants, and gain a more in-depth understanding of problem as it

relates to the study (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, Creswell suggests that convergent parallel design strengthens data collection and analysis to give the researcher a more in-depth understanding of the research problem. The quantitative component to this design will provide concrete statistical data, as the qualitative components, given their nature, will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Further, their integration will provide more insight on how the different variables interact, thus strengthening the validity of the inquiry.

### **Research site**

This study took place at an average-size high school in coastal South Carolina. The school is a public converted-charter high school. Although maintaining a charter board as its governing body, the school is a public school serving a designated constituent district. The school caters primarily to students in the geographic location but is also comprised of students from various other areas in the district. A large component of the school is its International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, which serves over 200 students who are either seeking an IB course certificate or the full IB diploma. Consequently, the world language and other content area curricula are loosely designed to accommodate for these students, with the understanding that our entire school is designated as an IBO World School. During the 2019-2020 school year, the school's population was 1654, with a White population of 67%, an African American population of 28%, and a Hispanic population of 3%; 2% of students represent two or more races or were not identified. According to the district and state-approved charter, the school must, within reason, reflect the demographic of its zoned district. Nearly 30% of students receive free or

reduced lunch, and over 20% of students at the high school are labeled Gifted and/or Artistically Talented.

The World Language Department offers coursework in both French and Spanish. The French program offers 8 courses including Beginner (Levels 1 and 2), Intermediate (Levels 3 and 4), and Higher-Level IB (Years 4 and 5). Beginning at level 3, students may choose either a College Preparatory track or Honors track for Level 3 and 4 courses. In 2001, the high school piloted two French and Spanish Culture and Civilization courses, with a prerequisite of Level 2. During the last academic year, the course has changed names to Honors French IV: Culture, maintaining the same prerequisite and carrying an intermediate designation.

**Participants.** Participants in this study included eight of the twelve students enrolled in the Honors French Culture and Civilization class at Marshview High School (pseudonym). As Effron and Ravid (2013) suggest, participants should be deliberately chosen based on their demonstration of a wide range of characteristics. Therefore, the eight participants were selected as participants based on their previous experience with French courses, with two students having completed French Level 2, two students having completed Level 3 and three students having completed Level 4 or another elective language course. Three of the other four students who did not participate in this study electively chose to not participate due to their involvement with other scholastic activities that removes them frequently from the classroom. The other student who did not participate holds an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that limits social interactions. All of the students electively continued language study, as they noted in a pre-course survey that they did not enroll to simply meet the language requirement to attend a four-

year university. Below is a profile for each student with pseudonyms to maintain the students' confidentiality.

***Terry*** is a White sophomore student who began his study of language in local preparatory school. His production of language is often fluent, and, per his course entry survey, he is mostly interested in European History and Civilization. His language production skills, per his previous classification in French year two, was mid-intermediate, a high score for a student completing the second year of language. Although Terry does not hold the Gifted and Talented label, he is enrolled in upper-level coursework (Honors and AP courses) and has been designated a pre-IB student and is considering completing the full IB Diploma Program for the next school year.

***Lidia*** is a White sophomore student who began her French student in Southern France. She is fluent in the spoken language but encounters some difficulty with higher-level thinking tasks and written production skills. Per the initial student survey, Lidia is interested in French style, culinary arts, and fashion, and her intention in taking the course was to further develop reading and writing skills. Lidia is not currently labeled Gifted and Talented, as she was studying in France when students were tested. She is also a designated pre-IB student and will continue with her study of French and Spanish through the IB Diploma Program for the next two years.

***Ralph*** is a senior African American male who began his study of language in middle school. He is currently a senior, and his performance in previous courses has been labeled average, achieving a C average in language courses, and being labeled low-intermediate as of his previous class's final spoken assessment. Ralph is quick to participate in class and has indicated on his pre-course survey that he is mostly interested

in being able to hold fluent conversation with native speakers. He is also interested in history, politics, and current affairs. Ralph is labeled as receiving free and reduced lunch.

**Francis** is a White male student who did not begin his study of language until entering high school. Unlike the other students, he has had minimal exposure to the target language, only completing three semesters at the high school level. Francis has received a wide range of grades and classifications in previous courses. In his Level II course, he was labeled advanced novice, although his coursework average was well below the class's average. During his previous course, Francis received a high intermediate designation, maintaining an average score more reflective of the class's average. As indicated on his interest survey, Francis enjoys European history and politics, and wishes to major in Political Science at a four-year university.

**Annabel** is a senior student who identifies as mixed race. She began her language student in middle school and has taken four semesters of French at the high school level. She claims to be passionate about all aspects of the French language and culture. Annabel, although not labeled an English Language Learner, was exposed to the Turkish language growing up, and speaks three languages fluently. Annabel has been labeled as low-advanced per her previous year's spoken assessment and plans to continue her language study at the university level by majoring in international business with an emphasis on language.

**Colleen** is a white junior student who has only taken two previous semesters of French courses. She began her language study only in her sophomore year yet has scored average (advanced beginner) on both previous speaking assessments. She is thoughtful and accurate in her language production but struggles with using higher-level vocabulary

that corresponds with the advanced speakers of the class. Colleen has indicated that she is interested in arts and literature and plans to continue her study of language throughout her senior year.

**Ginny** is a White junior student who has completed three years of language study at the high school level. She has maintained an A-average throughout all of her language courses and has noted that she is most intrigued and enthusiastic about grammar and writing in the target language. She has scored above average (mid-intermediate) in her previous years' oral assessments yet claims to struggle with listening comprehension and interactive speaking within groups. Ginny is very communicative about her shortfalls in French, and frequently asks for additional assignments to solidify her language skills. Ginny is labeled as a Gifted and Talented learner and also identified as receiving free or reduced lunch.

**Addy** is a White senior student who began her language study at the middle-school level. Unlike many of the other students, Addy has had significant gaps in the scheduling of her language courses. Whereas she has taken three semesters of French, she was not able to take language courses during her sophomore year and struggled to maintain the same average in intermediate coursework. She has been labeled as low-intermediate per her latest speaking assessment yet has scored well above average on writing categories since the beginning of her language career. Per her pre-survey, Addy has an acute interest in literature, art, poetry, and education. She is planning on continuing her studies as a four-year university as an education major and French minor.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, all participants scored a minimum of proficient on the speaking portion of the school's Student Learning Objective profile.



Past data showed that all eight students were, at some point during their language career, labeled Intermediate Novice Learners on the AATF's speaking competency scale.

### **The Implementation of Project-Based Learning**

#### **The Intervention**

Prior to initiating the data collection process, I completed a research based PjBL lesson plan (See Appendix A), created a design for the study, constructed a methodology, and determined which instruments would allow for the most valid data related to the research questions. I designed the project based on the major core themes of the course and the IB: Human Ingenuity, Sharing the Planet, Identities, Experiences, and Social Organization. Clinging to the integrity of the structure of project-based learning, the project focused on societal francophone problems, was inquiry-based, and built on student choice in the process. The students completed a project entitled: *Vous êtes profs* (You are Professors) where students selected a controversial historical or current francophone issue, presented the information to the class, and defended their arguments with solutions. The assessment, or final production piece, included students presenting their individual lesson plans, resources, and discussion forms to their classmates, which later facilitated informal conversations or debates about the selected topics. Therefore, the intervention provided numerous opportunities for formative assessment, and resulted in the creation of a final interactive project that was created by the students (Buck Institute, 2016). I assumed the role of a facilitator, as the students were responsible for the manipulation of the information, the synthesis of material, completion of the reflective components of the formative assessments, and the creation of all of the summative components.

The intervention took place over a period of 10 instructional days, the general timeframe of an instructional unit on 4x4 90-minute block scheduling. Students were presented with the subject of the thematic unit and were exposed to minimal guided vocabulary and preliminary base information during the introductory phase. Students navigated through a series of small formative assessments related to at least one of the core themes, and the class adopted some elements of a flipped classroom model in which students collaboratively prepared inside and outside of the classroom. The students generally worked at their own pace throughout the duration of the project but were encouraged to meet target progress points throughout the unit. Students were responsible for completing assessments based on new vocabulary acquisition, analysis forms, reflection forms, and documented their progress on paper and/or shared documents. Students were expected to apply their discoveries to a series of generated open-ended questions based on their cultural understanding of the gathered information.

The final products were the students' lesson plan implementation, where two students collaboratively taught the lesson to the class and facilitated class discussions based on their selected articles. All student lessons maintained a focus on cultural awareness and cultural connections as selected from authentic sources from various francophone countries or regions. The selected pairs were charged with self-monitoring and reflected daily on progress, engagement, and cultural components gathered as a result of the day's discovery. Pre-designed rubrics were available for the students and are aligned with the interactive speaking assessment rubrics from the course (see Appendices B and C). The teacher simply served as a guide, answering questions and redirecting students only when necessary.

As would take place during traditional assessments, I recorded the students throughout the duration of the summative activities by means of Digital Voice Recorders and Voice Memos. The participants' final projects took the form of an interactive activity consisting of one debate, a forum discussion, and two semi-formal conversations that stimulated further interactive and receptive skills.

### **Data Collection Instruments for RQ1**

To answer the first research question, the effects of project-based learning on student interaction in the target language, I used three data collection instruments. I first collected the data I obtained from the pre- and post-assessments for interactive speaking, and then data from field notes and the responses from a daily student reflection form.

#### **Pre-Assessment of Interactive Speaking**

To receive baseline data, prior to the intervention, the students were required to complete, as per the course syllabus, a traditional pre-designed interactive speaking activity. The students also completed this assignment in pairs and presented their work to the class, providing the same opportunity to demonstrate interactive speaking competencies. Prior to the intervention, the students were given an authentic French article and were asked to prepare a paired interactive speaking assessment based on scenarios. The students completed their assessments during the regularly scheduled class, and their interactive speaking assessments were recorded by DVRs. I then transcribed the assessment and scored each pair's work based on each criterion from the interactive speaking rubric. I recorded the individual results based on both Criterion: language production and interactive/receptive skills. I recorded the results electronically

and later used the collected data to be compared with the results of the summative assessment for the PjBL unit that followed.

**Summative speaking assessments.** After five days of preparation and formative preparation, the students began their presentations and interactive activities. They created their own lesson plans, including preparation materials to be distributed to the other students. The preparation materials included vocabulary lists in the target language, reading comprehension questions, and discussion questions that each student prepared outside of class before participating in the series of interactive speaking assessments. Over the course of four days, I assessed the students on their interactive speaking using the same criteria as the pre-assessment: language production skills and interaction/receptive skills. From the collected data, I later compared them to the scores obtained from the pre-assessment and recorded the results.

**Field notes.** Understanding that this investigation intends to understand a phenomenon experienced by students, it was imperative to discover the context in which these students behave, engage, and interact in the target language. Additionally, I was able to discover the students' attitudes and perspectives towards PjBL activities by noting specific functions in the target language. To accomplish this, I observed the students throughout the duration of the PjBL activities by means of naturalistic or direct observations (Creswell, 2014). This allowed the undertaking of a discovery-oriented and inductive approach in class and gain a holistic perspective of students as they maneuvered through the activities in the instructional unit.

**Student reflections.** At the conclusion of every class, the students completed a small reflection piece allowing them to recount their experience regarding the day's

activities. According to Dunlap (2016), the use of student reflective components provides an opportunity for researchers to hear the voices of students and allow for the expression of thought and changes they experience as part of their overall learning experiences. Via a small reflection form (Appendix F), students responded to a small series of five open-ended questions regarding daily activities.

### **Data Collection Instruments for RQ2**

To collect data for the second research question, the effects of PjBL on student engagement, I used three data collection instruments. For a quantitative component, I collected data from student engagement surveys, and for the two qualitative components, I gathered responses from student reflection forms and responses from the focus group.

**Student engagement surveys.** Following the implementation of the project-based learning activities, I asked each participant to complete a brief, fixed four-question survey in order to reflect and report on elements of engagement throughout the process. According to Mertler (2014), fixed- surveys are beneficial in research and can simplify and add control to the data collection process. The survey was created to capture the students' perceptions and feedback on the efficacy of the project-based learning unit. Students were specifically asked to rate their experience based on the following engagement indicators: sense of value, overall level of engagement, awareness, and problem-solving (Appendix G).

**Focus group.** I selected four students to, at the end of the PjBL activities, to participate in a focus group. Understanding that this type of qualitative interviewing is necessary when not all behaviors can be physically observed, interviews through focus groups can allow for a deeper insight as to how people interpret the world around them

(Mills, 2014). The focus group maintained the goal of soliciting views and opinions from the participants. Using a semi-structured interviewing format (Appendix H), this form of data collection instrument served as a meaning-making process, as the main objective was to have the participants openly and candidly share their perceptions, attitudes, and motivating factors (if any) that were stimulated by PjBL.

***Focus group selection.*** For the purpose of gathering more detailed student perspectives of the implementation of PjBL, the researcher assembled a focus group consisting of four of the eight participants. Given the nature of the small selection, a purposeful sample was used in order to reduce associated biases (Mertler, 2014). The selected group was chosen based on the participants' diversity in regard to gender, race, economic status and achievement (unweighted GPA) in past language courses.

Table 3.1 Demographic information for student participants in focus group

<b>Student</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>F/R Lunch</b>	<b>Language GPA</b>
<b>Francis</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Annabel</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Mixed-Race</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Ginny</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Ralph</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>2.75</b>

## **Data Collection Methods**

### **Data Collection Method for RQ1**

I first gathered the data from the students' pre-and post-assessment interactive scores. The pre- and post-assessment were scored on an assessment rubric containing two criteria. The first criterion measured the students' level of interaction based on their

language production. The second criterion measured the students' interactive and receptive skills. Each criterion scored the students on a rating from 1-5, with 1 representing a poor score and 5 representing a superior score. The results of the data were later combined to represent an overall score of 2-10.

Over the course of a ten-day period, I collected data through field notes where I observed the students as they navigated through the activities in the target language. I also used the field notes during the students' summative assessments, when students were presenting and facilitating their lessons. When observing the students, I was examining specifically their abilities to interact in the target language, noting features of their language production use and interactive/receptive skills.

At the conclusion of eight class periods, I collected data from the students' reflection forms, which they submitted at the end of the instructional period or at the end of their ILT/lunch period. To gain insight on the students' interaction skills, three of the survey questions were designed to incite responses about interaction in the language. Students were asked what they liked most about their project during the class period, what they liked the least, and were asked to document what they learned about the French language and culture. Additionally, there was an additional comment selection where students had the opportunity to elaborate on any of the preceding questions or expand on original ideas.

### **Data Collection Methods for RQ2**

I first collected quantitative data from a brief 4-question survey, where students were asked to document to what degree project-based learning affected their learning experience in terms of engagement. The questions were based on a Likert Scale which

included a range of impact frequencies from (1) “not at all” to (5) “a great deal.” The categories reflected engagement through four categories: sense of value, overall engagement, awareness, and problem-solving. The results of the surveys are categorized into responses to each indicator as well as categorically compared. I also listed the results of each students’ response for further interpretation.

Over a period of eight days, the students completed the remaining questions on the reflection survey. Whereas three of the questions were intended to capture their perspective on interactive speaking, the remaining questions were designed to gather their perspectives on their own engagement. Students were asked what they liked the most and least during class that day and were also asked how they felt about their overall progress. In a separate question, the students were prompted to address certain strategies that they had learned and how they would apply those in the future. There was additionally an extra comment section that allowed the students to note any additional thoughts or comments.

At the end of the PjBL unit, I conducted a focus group that consisted of four students who had participated in the study. I asked the questions in the style of semi-structured interviews, left many opportunities for students to elaborate on responses, and redirected the students when necessary. The focus group session lasted for nearly 45 minutes and took place directly after class during students’ ILT and lunch period. The focus group was recorded with Digital Voice Recorders. Additionally, students were asked to elaborate on specific comments they had made on the student reflection forms. I then asked the students to reflect on which elements are most and least valuable to them, how their interest in PjBL changed over the course of the instructional unit, their overall



experience, challenges they encountered, experiences with their partners, and the impact of the activity on their level of engagement. The main purpose of the focus group interviews was to create a socially constructed group perspective regarding the effect of PjBL on students' successes, struggles, and engagement components that were further linked trends associated with the with the results of the student reflection forms and the quantitative findings.

### **Data Analysis for RQ1**

In order to analyze the data from this research project, I used a convergent parallel mixed-method design to answer the following research question based on the effects of Project Based Learning:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?

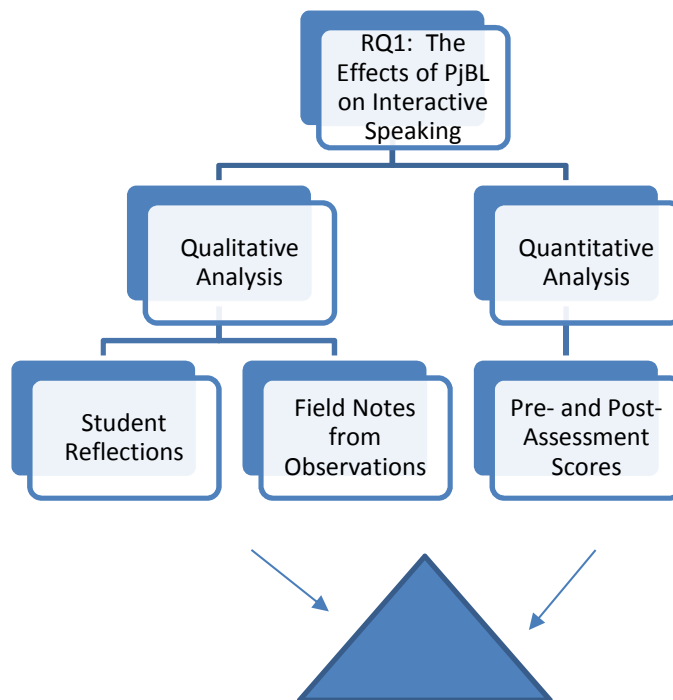


Figure 3.2 Procedure for analysis of RQ1

As Mertler (2014) claims, analyzing the data is where its cyclical approach becomes an active and crucial part of the study. After the collection of the assessment scores and data collected from the student reflections and observational field notes, I completed an analysis the quantitative results based on the overall interaction scores, as well as analyzed the sub-components that measured language use an interactive/receptive skill respectively. I then compared the data based on the results of a sample paired *t*-test which, according to Mertler (2014) is an appropriate process for comparing and analyzing two sets of data obtained by multiple participants. This allowed me to identify any statistical changes that may have occurred as a result of the intervention and helped to identify what is typical and standard about the group of students. As Mertler (2014) suggests, the standard for statistical significance is demonstrated as  $p < .05$ , indicating that there exists a five percent or less possibility that the events occurred by chance rather than as a direct result of the intervention. I used statistical analysis derived from the scores and analyzed the data by mean and mode. This allowed me to observe an overall view of the students' performance on both assessments.

I collected qualitative data by means of student reflection forms and field notes. After compiling a list of responses from the student reflection forms, I then electronically recorded the notes obtained through the observations. Unlike some analysis models, these two components were analyzed collectively, as there was a direct correlation between student reflection forms and observations. Following, placed all the notes into a spreadsheet, frequently reflecting on the research questions and supporting theory. I then coded the data in order to find repetitive words and recurring themes from both the field notes and the student reflection forms (Mills, 2014). According to Komori and Keene

(2017), thematic analysis can be used to find connections among various data collection tools. As such, I then categorized the data, resulting in the emergence of broader themes. Following, I merged my results and findings retrieved from the quantitative and qualitative outcomes using a in order to generate the results for RQ1 through triangulation, which, according to Creswell (2014), can verify the consistency of findings reported from a variety of data collection instruments.

### **Data Analysis for RQ2**

I used three types of data collection instruments to and used a convergent parallel design to answer the following research question:

2. What are the effects of project-based learning on engagement in the intermediate world language classroom?

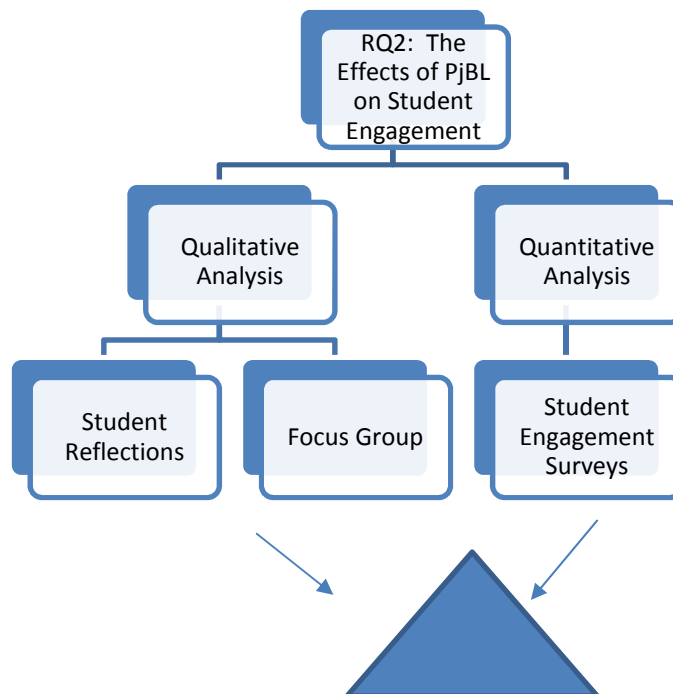


Figure 3.3 Procedure for analysis of RQ2

Following the implementation of the project-based learning activities, I asked each student to complete a brief four-question survey in order to reflect and report on elements of engagement throughout the process. The survey was created to capture the students' perceptions and feedback on the efficacy of the project-based learning unit on their engagement. I specifically asked students to rate their experience based on the following engagement indicators: sense of value, level of engagement through participation, awareness, and problem-solving (Appendix G). The students documented to what degree project-based learning affected their learning experience based on a Likert Scale which included a range of impact frequencies where one represents "not at all" and five represents "a great deal". The results of the surveys are categorized into responses to each indicator and categorically compared. Subsequently, I also noted the individual responses of each student.

I then engaged in thematic analysis of the data collected from the student reflections and responses from the focus group. I coded for analysis, categorized, and later re-examined to determine emerging themes, as suggested by Efron and Ravid (2014) who asserts that categorizing and determining themes can help build a coherent interpretation to construct logical and structured findings. Following this step, I interpreted the quantitative and qualitative outcomes in order to generate the results of the inquiry by triangulation, which, according to Mertler, 2014, verifies consistency to adds trustworthiness to the results.

### **Triangulation of RQ1 and RQ2**

According to Creswell (2014), triangulation verifies the consistency of findings that is obtained by numerous data collection methods, which can elucidate

complementary dimensions of the same phenomenon. Understanding the different layers involved in my methodology, I used a broader scope in order to provide better context for the overall results. This combination allowed to me to further analyze and investigate my findings on a more holistic scale, while equally allowing me to establish some of the nuances in the results and overarching themes of the findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

One of the many roles of the researcher is to neutralize pre-conceived biases associate with the inquiry. Among these considerations are the consent and confidentiality of the participants. According to Mertler (2014), the participants and parent/guardian must give consent prior to the study and prior to the use of observations and interview questions to be posed during the focus group. To further maintain the safety of the students, the students' names were kept confidential and were coded throughout the study results. Additionally, the Charleston County School District (2018) mandates a specific process for researchers, including parental consent. The charter board of my high school also requires that graduate students submit a parent letter (Appendix I) as well as a detailed description of the study and participants.

Additionally, taking into account the standards and timeline of the instructional unit, the researcher avoided the disruption of general classroom protocol and pacing. According to Creswell (2014), researchers should be cognizant of their disruptions and added pressure to research subjects and should eliminate factors that impede the general flow of classroom activities. Furthermore, in respect of the established student-teacher relationship, the I respected the potential power imbalance by reiterating the purpose of the study and by stressing the voluntary nature of the inquiry.

The confidentiality of the students was taken to account at all points throughout the process. The researcher did not affiliate students with assessment scores, nor revealed the names of students participated in the study (Mertler, 2014). I also used pseudonyms for the school and participants to protect the anonymity of all involved. I maintained that all information, including records, transcriptions, and assessment data were secured electronically and were kept secure and that only I had access.

To further validate the findings and maintain the integrity of the collected data, participants were asked to validate observations and field notes, as well as notes taken from the focus group. Students were prompted to indicate items that did not correspond with their attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, two colleagues, one in the world language department at my school, and another who is a district liaison, both of whom are somewhat familiar with action research, assisted me in verifying trends in the data. I also asked them to check for holistic fallacies to ensure that the judgements and inferences that I made were consistent with the findings.

According to Mertler (2014), the validity of research is heavily increased when data collection methods and analysis are trustworthy. Credibility, therefore, entails the methods and analysis follow the intentionality of the study. All tools, therefore, must be valid and trustworthy. Additionally, the triangulation of all data findings increased the credibility and trustworthiness of the inquiry.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers are responsible for the close examination of their instructional techniques and it is heavily emphasized that educational change will not take place until practitioners are involved in curriculum development drawing from the knowledge

gained through inquiry (Efron & Ravid, 2014). Action research allows for teachers to systematically inquire about teaching and learning, to improve their instruction and practices (Mertler, 2014). In order to gain more insight into the widely recognized problem of practice among language teachers, I implemented a new instructional design that allowed for the investigation of the effects of project-based learning in the French classroom with the hope of determining potential benefits to improve students' interactive speaking skills in the target language.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The purpose of chapter four of this action research study is to articulate the findings of this action research study. The identified problem of practice centered around the reluctance of L2 learners to use and engage in the target language. Consequently, there was a need to vary and restructure teaching strategies and modern methodologies in language courses in order to facilitate more engagement and illicit advanced academic performance among world language learners. In order to address this problem, I implemented a project-based learning unit based on student selected subjects, all of which are based on core and optional themes suggested by the IB curriculum.

The data collected from this mixed-method study was used to examine the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking and student engagement in the target language. The data collection was designed to collect a variety of student and teacher perceptions as well as measure student growth in terms of their ability to interact in the target language. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?
2. What are the effects of project-based learning on student engagement in the intermediate world language classroom?



For this study, I used six types of data collection instruments. For the quantitative components, I retrieved data from student reflections and interactive speaking assessments. The qualitative components included student reflections, the field notes obtained through daily observation, and responses from the student focus group. This chapter begins with background information regarding the research process and discusses the following: the research questions, a review of the methodology, results acquired via the Likert-scale questions, and the results for the interactive speaking activity facilitated through the project-based learning activities. The data I obtained from field notes and results of the interactive speaking assessments are presented in a fashion that constructively demonstrates their relative relationship to the first research question, and data obtained from student engagement forms, focus group responses, and student reflections is represented through an analysis of the second research question. An in-depth discussion of these results follows in Chapter 5.

### **Data Collection Sequence**

The data collection cycle occurred over the course of ten days, the average time frame for a curricular unit in the course. The activity required several weeks of planning, and the researcher ensured that all components of the research project were aligned with the South Carolina curriculum standards for World Languages. The research project involved the students selecting articles and news sources that specifically related to the five core themes of the class: Identities, Experiences, Human Ingenuity, Sharing the Planet, and Social Organization. The students worked with a partner to determine their topic and to create a class interactive discussion on the topic of their choosing. Of the twelve students in the class, eight students participated. Three students were not selected,

as their involvement in other academic programs and extracurricular activities frequently removes them from the classroom. Another student has an Individualized Education Plan, whose accommodations denote that independent study is sometimes required. The researcher provided a letter to students and their families outlining the clear objectives of the study, participants' rights, and a section to note their assent or decline to participate in the study (Appendix F). The researcher clarified to the eleven students that they all would participate in the project-based learning unit and would be held accountable to the same standards as their classmate participants.

### **Data Collection for RQ1**

Three data collection instruments, pre- and post-test assessment scores, student reflections, and field notes were employed to answer the following research question:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?

The purpose of the score analysis was to measure the students' abilities to interact in the target language prior to and following the intervention. I administered a pre-test, a traditional IB-themed interactive speaking activity, to obtain baseline data prior to the implementation of the intervention. The rubric (Appendix G and Appendix F) assesses two components of interactive speaking competencies: productive language and interactive and receptive skills. I then noted the students' results which are based on a score from 1-10 (Appendix G and Appendix F).

To further examine the effects of PjBL on interactive speaking skills, I kept detailed descriptive field notes based on daily observations in order to capture relevant experiences throughout the implementation of PjBL. I then documented the notes

electronically, indicating components of their interactive speaking abilities. Additionally, I collected data from a series of eight student reflections which captured the students' perspectives, perceived growth, and details of acquired language during the series of PjBL activities.

At the conclusion of each of the eight instructional class periods, the participants were asked to complete a student reflection form (See Appendix E) in order to capture which, if any, elements of project-based learning promoted their interactive speaking skills throughout course of the intervention. Three of the five questions prompted the students to record their likes and dislikes about the project and what they had learned about the language and culture that day. The reflection form also contained an optional open-ended section at the end to afford the opportunity for the students to elaborate on any of the preceding questions.

The student reflection forms were mutually intended to further the students' metacognitive skills and reflect on which practices are most beneficial to them as language learners. According to the Buck Institute (2016), reflections can aid students in a deeper understanding of their learning and connections to their goals and efforts, helping them to determine their progress related to their learning goals. After the data collection process, I analyzed the quantitative results and compared them to the findings yielded from the two qualitative components collectively. I then triangulated the data received from the results and findings.

### **Quantitative Results**

The quantitative method, an analysis of pre- and post-test interactive speaking scores was implemented to determine whether the levels of interactive speaking were

affected by project-based learning, specifically in terms of interactive skills and language production. This component was guided by the following:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on the interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?

### **Results of the Pre- and Post-Assessments**

The collected data demonstrated that notable gains were made for the sample group of student-participants between pre- and post-test interactive scores. This report specifically demonstrates the overall scores of student performance based on language use and interactive and receptive skills off the Interactive Speaking Assessment (Appendix A and Appendix B). To determine these results, I conducted a paired sample *t*-test, which, according to Mertler (2014) is an appropriate process for comparing and analyzing two sets of data obtained by multiple participants. This allowed me to identify any statistical changes that may have occurred as a result of the intervention and helped to identify what is typical and standard about the group of students. As Mertler (2014) suggests, the standard for statistical significance is demonstrated as  $p < .05$ , indicating that there exists a five percent or less possibility that the events occurred by chance rather than as a direct result of the intervention.

**Collective results.** The results indicated that there was a valid increase in overall scores (Criterion A + Criterion B) from the pre-test ( $M=6.6$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ) and post-test ( $M=8.2$ ,  $SD=.93$ ) in terms of overall interactive speaking skills in the target language;  $t(7)=4.69$ ,  $p=.0022$ . These results infer that a substantial difference exists in levels of interactive speaking abilities, and that it is highly probable that the difference can be attributed to the associated PjBL activities.

**Results for criterion A.** I then conducted an additional paired sample *t*-test, noting the results of the first criterion of the Interactive Speaking Rubric, which highlights language production skills. The results indicated that there was a minimal increase from the pre-test (M=3.56, SD=1.02) and post-test (M=3.75, SD=0.66) in terms of language production skills in the target language;  $t(7)=0.75$ ,  $p=0.48$ . These results infer that there was only a slight increase in levels of speaking production abilities that can be attributed to the intervention.

**Results for criterion B.** I then conducted an additional paired sample *t*-test, noting the results of the second criterion of the Interactive Speaking Rubric, which highlights receptive and interactive skills in the target language. The results indicated that there was a significant increase from the pre-test (M=2.94, SD=0.86) and post-test (M=4.25, SD=0.66) in terms of interactive skills in the target language;  $t(7)=5.70$ ,  $p=0.0007$ . These results infer that there is a significant difference in levels of receptive and interactive skills that can be attributed to the series of PjBL activities.

This quantitative portion of the investigation concluded that the overall performance of the student-participants demonstrated an increase from the pre-test and post-tests in terms of interactive speaking abilities. The results indicate that the participants' language productive skills only minimally increased, whereas the students' receptive and interactive skills significantly increased. As demonstrated by these data, PjBL had a positive impact on overall interactive speaking skills in the target language.

### **Qualitative Findings**

To capture these findings, I kept descriptive daily field notes for each of the instructional periods and for the summative assessments. At the conclusion of each class

period, the students completed reflection forms that prompted them to report on new information regarding the language and culture and which parts of the lesson they found the most interesting. I reviewed reflection notes daily and again at the end of the unit. Following the coding and categorization of the collected data, I found three core emerging themes:

1. Connections to language through culture
2. Increased attempts to formulate advanced language structures
3. Increased fluency and ease of expression

### **Connections to Language Through Culture**

While language proficiency is deemed to be at the heart of language study (Standards for Foreign Language Learning, 2006), other aims of the modern curriculum include the understanding of language through cultural and communities. Correspondingly, Ali, Kazemian and Mahar (2015) assert that effective communicative strategies focus on the development of students' efficacy in communicating language through culture. The field notes indicated that the participants, when deciding upon topics, delved into a variety of cultural themes that ranged from immigration, technology, sports and leisure, and modern art.

Two paired students who completed their project on modern universal technologies noted that the information they were studying was applicable to their daily lives and claimed it to be useful to further investigate vocabulary and related terms associated with Smartphones, social networking, and mass media. Ginny commented on her initial reflection form, "(My partner and I) ...researched vocabulary associated with Smartphones and technology. We enjoyed our topic because that's something we use

every day.” Ginny and her partner, Terry, were equally noted on three different observations discussing their lack of previous knowledge about universal technology, and directly stated in class that they were surprised at certain cultural differences related to social media and streaming programs. Ginny stated “Je savais pas que les Français utilisaient encore Facebook et que Netflix était différent en France.”, translating to “I didn’t know that anyone still used Facebook and that Netflix was different in France.” Terry commented, “Apparemment Instagram est aussi Instagram en français” translating to, “Apparently Instagram is Instagram in French, too”. The students later noted on their reflection forms that they were surprised to discover other elements of cultural differences, such as the low cost of Internet service in France, and “l’interdiction des portables aux collèges”, translating to “the banning of cell phones in middle schools”.

Additionally, two participants notably captured the essence of the importance of cultural connections by demonstrating their interest enthusiastically discussing topics related to religion and immigration. Francis noted that he and Ralph had discussed the perspectives of racism in American and French cultures and noted on his reflection form:

In one of the articles it said that the French aren’t as racist as other cultures. I don’t know if that’s really true, but apparently some of the French are still xenophobic and don’t like Northern Africans. I thought they were more open-minded than we were.

As documented in the field notes, Francis frequently used higher-level vocabulary in his comments about “xénophobie”, “contrôles de sécurité”, “frontières”, “émeutes”, and “manifestations”, translating respectively to “xenophobia”, “security checks”, “borders”, “riots”, and “protests”. Both Francis and Ralph noted on their reflection forms

that cultural links were the driving force behind their interests by reporting connections to and among francophone cultures. Ralph, when commenting on Algerian peace agreements, made a substantial link to current immigration in France in stating “*That’s where the whole immigration thing started.*” when making references to the opening of French borders.

Furthermore, Addy, who investigated more modern themes including French trends, fashion, and schooling, indicated behavioral patterns among French teenagers, which provided evidence of understanding the native culture at a more conscious level. Addy noted on one of her reflections that she found it “fascinating” that French women value quality more than quantity in regard to daily attire. She was noted in informal conversations discussing perspectives offered by French fashion experts, accounts from French teenagers and their parents, and offered elaborated responses to her partner regarding her findings from each day. The expansion in Addy’s cultural connections were also later demonstrated through culturally relevant allied linguistic structures including her references to “fashion faux-pas”, “haute couture”, and “prêt-à-porter”.

The majority of the students, as documented in the researcher’s field notes, maintained consistent enthusiasm as to the cultural discoveries and connections made throughout the course of the PjBL activities. On their reflection forms, students generally took the opportunity to add remarks pertaining to some of the established cultural connections that they were encountering during the project.

### **Increased Attempts to Formulate Advanced Language Structures**

Results from the observer’s field notes and the data collected from the student surveys reported an increase in the use of certain language techniques associated with



higher-level language use. According to the ACTFL Proficiency Guide (2016), advanced-level communication in the L2 can be determined through confidence and sustained discourse that includes the use of idioms, humor, culturally authentic expressions, and interjections. Additionally, according to the parameters of assessment (International Baccalaureate, 2016), advanced users of the L2 should employ a vocabulary that is rich, varied, and articulate. Students reported and were observed employing higher level language in various domains.

**Idiomatic structures.** The participants, through discovery during formative activities or recall during the summative assessments, reported and were noted employing a variety of idiomatic expressions ranging from idioms associated with time or weather, prepositional phrases, conversational fillers, interjections, as well as other expressive descriptors. The following is a list that highlights the reported expressions from the students on the formative survey and documented in the observer's field notes.

Table 4.1 Examples of idiomatic language use

<i>Day of Instruction</i>	<i>French Expression</i>	<i>Direct Translation</i>	<i>English Equivalent</i>	<i>Student</i>
2	C'est kif-kif. ( <i>Arabic- kif kif</i> )	Exactly the same.	Either one.	Francis
2	Ça m'est égale.	It is equal to me.	It doesn't matter.	Ginny
2	J'ai la chair de poule.	I have the skin of a chicken.	I'm really scared.	Francis

3	Au bout d'un moment...	At the end of a moment...	After a while...	Annabel
3	Il me prend pour...	He takes me for...	He thinks I am...	Lidia
3	Il a l'air que...	It has the air of...	It seems that...	Francis
4	C'était le coup de foudre.	It was the cut of thunder.	It was love at first sight.	Ralph
4	Tu es dans la lune.	You are in the moon.	You're not paying attention.	Colleen
5	C'est pas la mer à boire.	It isn't the sea to drink.	It's not that serious.	Lidia
6	J'ai passé une nuit blanche.	I passed a white night.	I pulled an all-nighter.	Colleen
6	Tu as le cafard?	Do you have the cockroach?	Are you depressed?	Ralph
6	Elle a un chat dans la gorge.	She has a cat in her throat.	She's tongue-tied.	Ginny
6	Je le ferai quand les poules auront des dents.	I will do it when chickens have teeth.	That will never happen.	Terry

6	Ça me semble bizarre.	That seems strange to me.	That looks weird.	Addy
6	Je suis arrivée à...	I arrived to...	I managed to...	Ginny
7	Monsieur un Tel	Mister a Such	Mr. So-and-So	Lidia
7	Au secours!	To the service!	Help!	Ginny
7	Tant pis.	So much worse.	Too bad.	Annabel
7	Dans huit jours	In eight days	In a week	Terry
8	Et ainsi de suite	And thus, as follows	And so forth and so on	Ralph
8	L'habit ne fait pas le moine.	The habit doesn't make the monk.	You can't judge a book by its cover.	Ginny
9	Par contre	By contrast	On the other hand	Francis
9	En principe	In principal	Theoretically	Francis
10	Elle frise la cinquantaine.	She is curling the 50's.	She's about to turn 50.	Lidia
10	Il faisait lourd.	It was heavy.	It was humid.	Colleen
10	Ça sert à quoi?	That serves to what?	What's the point?	Lidia
10	En fait..	In fact	Actually	Annabel

This type of idiomatic use, generally problematic for L2 learners because they are not directly translatable from the native language, (van Ginkel & Dijkstra, 2020). The students' frequent use of these expressions indicates the formation of higher-level production skills, as the students further understand the cross-language overlap and its connection to the English language. Students also, through the appropriate input of these expressions, acquire the smaller associations with the embedded single-word vocabulary (Swain, 1980), thus building on their own lexicons.

**Attempts in formulating advanced moods and compound structures.** The data showed that students were prone to attempting higher-level grammar structures when navigating through the activities associated with project-based learning. Although sometimes not employed correctly, higher-order structures such as mood and tense manipulation, compound tense formation, and conjunction use were all attempted by numerous participants. I also noticed that the participants successfully reproduced some of these words or expression, either as a result of repeating their partners' language, or attempting to pronounce and use vocabulary that they discovered from authentic sources.

Specific accounts include Ginny, who, during an informal observation, expressed confusion about verb conjugations related to the subjunctive mood. She noted during her formative survey that she learned how to “change a verb” when it “follows a “que”, which indicates the recognition of structural patterns linked to mood formations after expressions of volition, doubt, emotion, or in conjunction formation. Ginny later determined that she was incorrect in her initial interpretation, yet self-scaffolded to determine some appropriate uses. Per the field notes recorded during the activities, I noticed that Ginny had occasionally employed this structure correctly in expressions such

as “*Je veux que tu m’aides.*” (“I want you to help me”), and “*afin que tout le monde comprenne*” (so that everyone understands).

I also observed an increased frequency of other higher-level structures in terms of direct and indirect pronoun usage, the use of filler expressions to create compound sentence structures, a notable increase of the frequency to include compound tenses in the target language. On four separate occasions, I overheard participants repeating expressions, phrases, or sentences from various data sources or as a result of partner interaction. Phrases from Addy, who demonstrated nearly a 2-point increase in interactive skills, frequently uttered expressions such as “*Tu m’entends.*” (“Do you hear me?”) and “*Vas-y.*” (“Go ahead.”). Terry, whose scores increased the most drastically, was noted repeating a variety of filler words to elaborate on originally laconic expressions. During the summative activity specifically, Terry was noted using expressions such as “*en fait*” (actually), “*en principe*” (in theory), “*à l’époque*” (“at the time”), and “*par conséquent*” (as a result). Colleen, noted as student with only beginner intermediate abilities, uniquely manipulated verbs into the compound past tense (although sometimes mistaking the auxiliary verbs) and mastered the use of certain conditional expressions such as “*j’aimerais*” and *je “voudrais*” (“I would like”) and “*Que ferais-tu?*” (“What would you do?”).

This increased use of linguistic complexities, including appropriate pronoun use, inversion, mood manipulation, and logical connectors, demonstrate higher language use that grammatical aspectual categories have a non-trivial influence on the spoken language and language comprehension among L2 learners (Stutterheim & Carroll, 2006).

**Use of informal structures and colloquial expressions.** Participants were also observed actively engaging in the use of colloquial expressions and informal structures in the target language. Contrary to perceptions that proper linguistic behavior should be common practice, the use of informal language directly relates to fluency (Moyer, 2018), and demonstrates the ability to highlight the nuances of language structures.

Discovered during observation was the frequent omission of the French word “ne” used to indicate negativity. Among francophone societies, the preverbal negative participle falls out of use during informal interactions Ashby (2001) provides an example and claims that this linguistic trend eliminates a redundancy marker in French:

Previous standard:

(1) *Je ne veux pas y aller.*

“I don’t want to go there.”

Present spoken standard:

(2) *Je veux pas y aller.*

“I don’t want to go there.”

Ralph, a student who was noted on several accounts for imitating these structures, noted on his third summative survey: “Dropping the *ne* must be like forming a contraction in English, and later elaborated on his remark by stating that “No one says, “*I do not know*.” They say, “*I dunno*”. Ralph noted, and was observed permanently incorporating this linguistic trend into his daily language production.

Table 4.2 Examples of colloquial language use

Informal Use	Formal Use	Translation
C’est pas grave.	Ce n’est pas grave.	It’s not serious.

Ça vaut pas la peine.	Ça ne vaut pas la peine.	It's not worth it.
Je sais pas.	Je ne sais pas.	I don't know.
Il prend pas le temps de...	Il ne prend pas le temps de...	He's not taking the time to...
J'ai pas remarqué.	Je n'ai pas remarqué.	I didn't notice.
J'en veux plus.	Je n'en veux plus.	I don't want anymore.

Throughout the daily activities of the intervention, Francis, through observation, was identified as using a variety of colloquial expressions that originated from visual and audio stimuli. Specifically noted on Francis's feedback forms were the uses of expressions "*Bref*" (interjection filler to indicate change of thought), "*Laisse tomber*" (Never mind.), and "*Tu parles de quoi?*" (What are you talking about?). Francis attributed these acquisitions to informal conversations and songs to which he and his partner were listening in preparing their research topics.

Equally noted was the use of abbreviated colloquial structures intended for use in extreme informal situations. Ginny and Terry both noted on their formative student surveys that they had discovered text sequences, songs, and "chatty e-mails" that demonstrated a variety of informal abbreviated colloquialisms. Additionally, they had both examined examples of exchanges on Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook. This led them to further examine abbreviations in text messaging, e-mails, and interactions on social media websites, where there is a practical motivation and excitement to type as few characters as possible, the two students were noted documenting and pronouncing the following:

Table 4.3 Examples of abbreviated colloquialisms

Abbreviated Text	Text	Text Translation
MDR	<i>Meurs de Rire</i>	Laughing out loud
À12C4	<i>À un de ces quatres</i>	I'll see you one of these days.
A+	<i>À plus (tard).</i>	See you later.
Ché pas.	<i>Je ne sais pas.</i>	I don't know.

The result of these linguistic shifts and formal deviances, although often disputed, are more well-adapted to an authentic social setting and is aligned with varying social skill sets included in true language acquisition.

**Fluency and ease of expression.** The field notes concluded that students, without interruption by the teacher, produced several moments of sporadic speech fluency. Despite many moments of disfluency during the collaborative activities, participants were frequently capable of expressing simple and complex ideas. According to Götz (2013), utterance fluency, whether produced correctly in terms of structure, is a beginning phase of advanced fluency or bilingualism. It is important to note that I did not analyze frequencies in terms of the correctness of lexical and grammatical functions, but more so maintained a focus on interactive skills, including fluid expression of thought and the formation of more complex ideas.

More specifically, participants, when working in collaboration with other students tended to progressively produce less repetitious statements, filled pauses, and self-correction. It was noted several times during the observations that students would



frequently mimic accents and pronunciations noted by native speakers during the research of the authentic videos, news reports, and television ads. Furthermore, the students, who had built a clear dependence on asking the teacher or advanced classmates for the definitions of words using English and wanting a direct translation, shifted that dependency to reference tools that were predominantly in the target language, and offered translations from French to French.

Ralph, whose interactive speaking scores improved drastically from the baseline assessment to the final assessment, was noted using many logical connectors such as “en dépit de” and “malgré le fait que” translating to “despite” and “despite the fact that”, and “en revanche”, meaning “on the other hand”, resulting in a higher level of fluency and the production of advanced sentence structure. Other students, mostly on the summative assessment, generally utilized the same type of expressions, yet relied on cognates to express their ideas. It was further noted that students would repeat learned expressions through multi-media websites and incorporate words or expressions into their language repertoires. Three students specifically explained their sources to members of other groups without directly stating the title of their articles. Addy elaborated on her topic utilizing advanced structures such as the subjunctive mood and demonstrative pronouns when stating, “ce qu’il faut que vous sachiez de ceux qui consomment trop”, translating to, “what you need to know about those who overconsume”, both grammar topics that she had not acquired through grammar instruction in prior language courses. These specific interactions were significant, especially considering that they were unassessed and unprompted.

In addition, I noted during the formative activities that participants were consistently engaged with their partners and adopted other students' expressions used in the informal setting. In some cases, expressions were basic and were not always representative of higher-level language use. Contrarily, three groups specifically, on more than three occasions each, willingly accepted corrective feedback and repeated compound sentences and expressions offered by their partners. Supporting research by Yoshida (2008), the students general maintained a positive perception of feedback in collaborative activities. On one occasion, a lower-level student demonstrated added confidence by correcting a near-native speaker of the class and introduced proverbial and colloquial expressions that she had acquired during her learning experience. This leads to future questions about the potential positive relationship between various forms of peer feedback and language acquisition.

As articulated in my problem of practice statement, students are generally reluctant to use the L2 as a result of their perceived need to use the language correctly. Gass and Selinker (2008) claim that this reluctance may be rooted in a lack of confidence in production. As a result, many students find comfort in speaking in laconic statements or directly answer posed questions and do not elaborate on ideas or potentially complex thoughts. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) link the students' developmental linguistic process to peers-group interactions, leading to questions about the efficacy of risk-taking in language acquisition.

### **Triangulation of RQ1 Findings**

This research question intended to explore the effects of PjBL on interactive speaking skills in the target language. I used three forms of data to triangulate the

findings, including the pre- and post-assessments for interactive speaking, student reflection forms, and field notes. According to Herr and Anderson (2014) the triangulation of data adds increased validity to an inquiry and provides further richness of data collected in a mixed-method study. The findings indicate that the implementation of PjBL had an overall significant impact of the students' interactive skills in the target world language.

Based on the student achievement from the pre- and post-assessments, PjBL was significantly effective in fostering and improving interactive language skills. Out of the eight participants of the study, only one student, Ginny, did not demonstrate growth in interactive speaking abilities. Contrarily, Ginny was noted to have developed higher-level language production skills, such as the subjunctive mood, as indicated on the observer notes and student reflections. Ginny developed, as a result of her inquiry skills, informal language structures related to technology and mass media.

The other seven students all demonstrated at least minimal growth, with three students increasing their overall scores by 2 points on a 10-point scale. Correspondingly, the three students who demonstrated the most significant gains, Ralph, Terry, and Addy, were noted as having attempted higher level grammar structures, colloquial expressions, and idioms in the target language. The attempted efforts to sustain correct language use was consistent through a variety of collected data. The qualitative data also demonstrated that the students achieved moments of sporadic or sustained fluency throughout the activities, as supported on their individual assessments for language production. While these themes did not all consistently emerge for all students during triangulation, these findings leave questions and opportunities for further research topics.

## **Data Collection for RQ2**

In order to investigate the effects of project-based learning on student engagement, I employed three data collection methods. I collected quantitative data through a brief 4-question student engagement survey, where I asked the students to rate the project's efficacy on four engagement components: a) sense of value, b) overall engagement in the activities, c) problem-solving, and d) awareness. I collected qualitative data through student reflections, on which the students documented their perceptions of daily activities. I then conducted a semi-structured interview with four students via a focus group. Participants in the focus group were also asked to elaborate on some of their responses to their documented reflections. I then analyzed the data from the student reflections and focus group transcription collectively. Following qualitative analysis, I then compared and triangulated these findings with the quantitative results in order to further answer the research question.

Following the implementation of the project-based learning activities, I asked each student to complete a brief four-question survey in order to reflect and report on elements of engagement throughout the process. The survey was created to capture the students' perceptions and feedback on the efficacy of the project-based learning unit. I specifically asked students to rate their experience based on the following engagement indicators: sense of value, level of engagement through participation, awareness, and problem-solving (Appendix G). The students documented to what degree project-based learning affected their learning experience based on a Likert Scale which included a range of impact frequencies where one represents "not at all" and five represents "a great

deal”. The results of the surveys are categorized into responses to each indicator as well as categorically compared.

### Quantitative Results

Following the data collection process, I analyzed the results and included a description of the data in terms of overall results, categorical results, and responses from individual students. This allowed me to investigate all components holistically and individually. Based on the overall results of the student engagement surveys, I concluded that project-based learning had a significant impact of overall student engagement. Most notable is the degree to which students found that PjBL had a great deal of impact on their engagement in the areas of overall engagement in the project as well as problem solving.

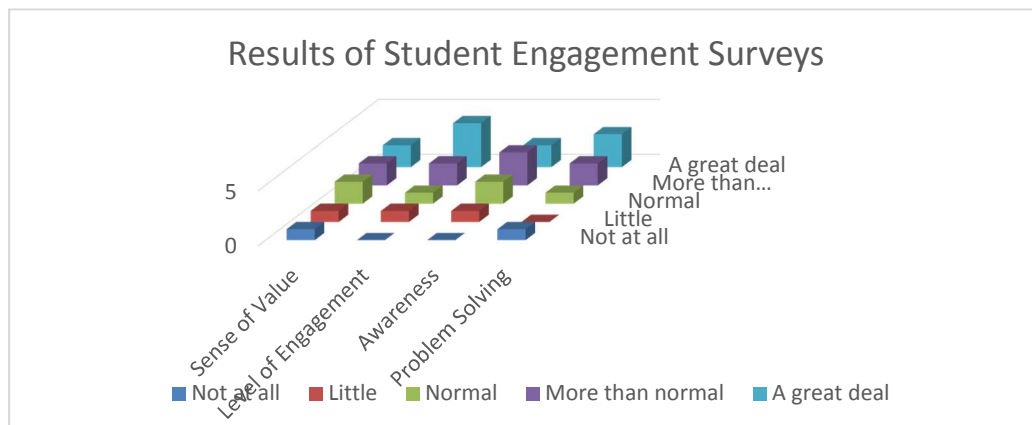


Figure 4.1 Overall results of student engagement survey

When reporting on the sense of value of the project, specifically how they felt their work was useful to them, fifty percent of students claimed that PjBL had at least a more than normal impact, whereas twenty five percent felt as if the PjBL activities had the same impact as traditional activities. One student reported the project having no impact, and one student noted that it had little impact in terms of sense of value.

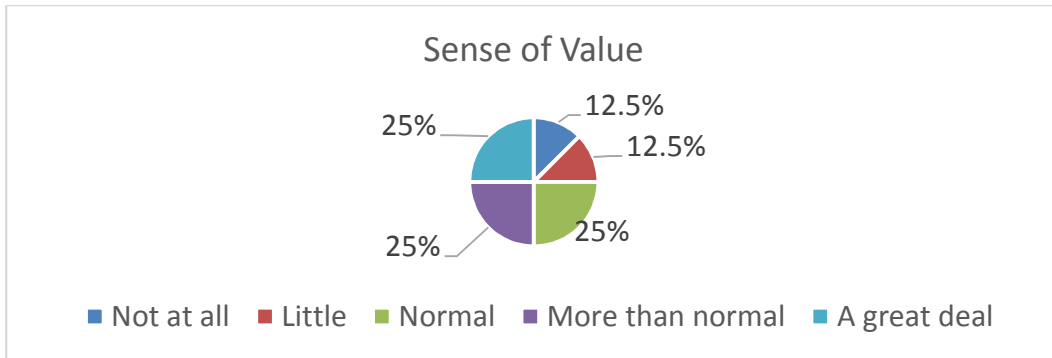


Figure 4.2 Results of student engagement survey for sense of value

The students reported that the project-based learning unit had a substantial effect on overall engagement, with fifty percent of the students indicating that the activities had a great deal of impact on their engagement in comparison to traditional activities. Twenty five percent of the students claimed that PjBL had a more than normal impact, one student concluded that it had a normal impact, and one student reported that it had little impact. No student reported that PjBL had no impact on her/his overall engagement.

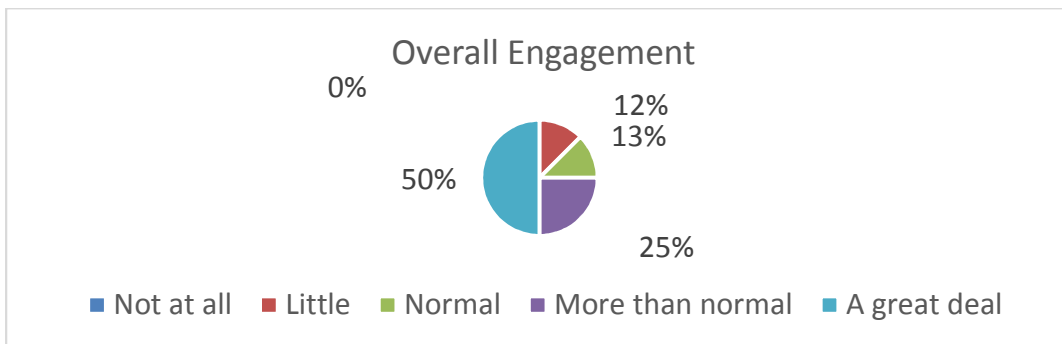


Figure 4.3 Results of student engagement survey for overall engagement

When asked to what degree the activity caused them to become more confident and creative problem solvers, three students reported that the activities had a great deal of impact, and two students reported that they felt that it had more than normal impact. One student claimed that it had a normal impact, and the final student concluded that PjBL activities had no impact on their problem-solving skills.

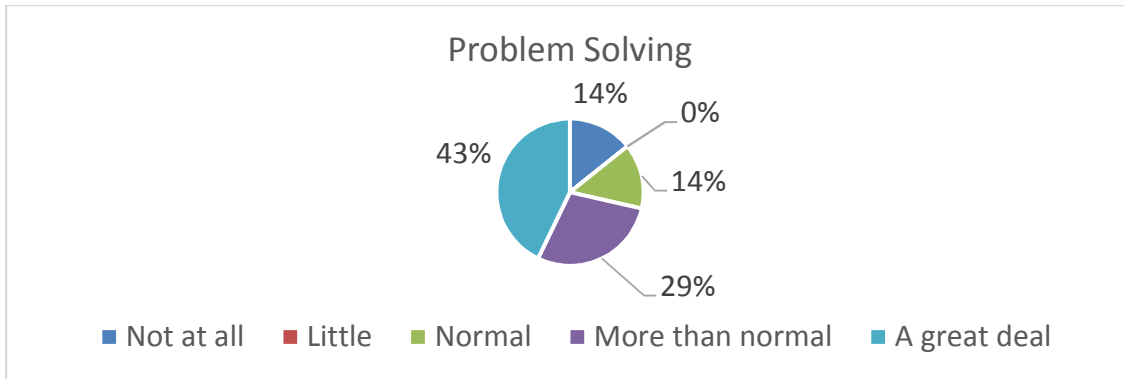


Figure 4.4 Results of student engagement survey for problem solving

In terms of awareness, when the students were asked to what extent their gained knowledge in class made them aware of their decisions 63% of students reported that PjBL had at least a more than normal impact, and no students noting that it had no impact on their awareness.

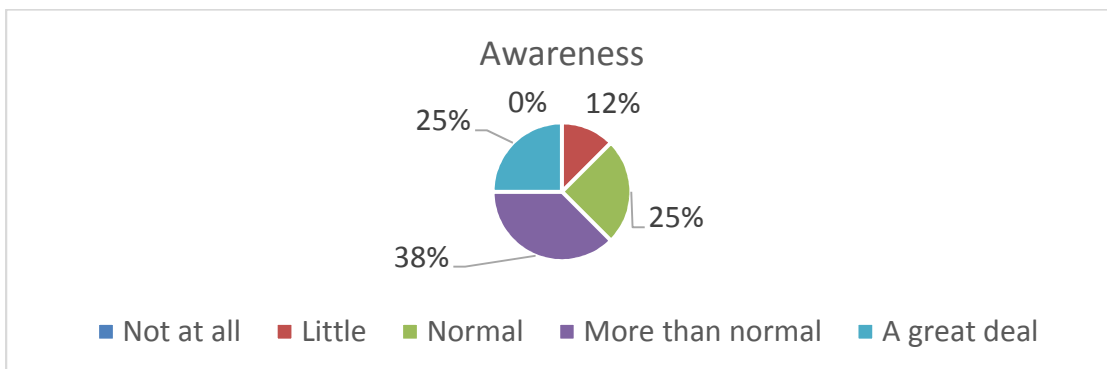


Figure 4.5 Results of student engagement survey for awareness

The results of the student engagement surveys indicate that all students found that PjBL had a significant impact on each student in at least one of the four categories. The three male students of the class, Terry, Ralph, and Frances, all noted that PjBL had at positive impact on all four levels of engagement. Lidia and Addy indicated the lowest scores, with Lidia stating that PjBL had less of an impact on her problem-solving skills, and Addy noting that she found a lower sense of value in the unit.

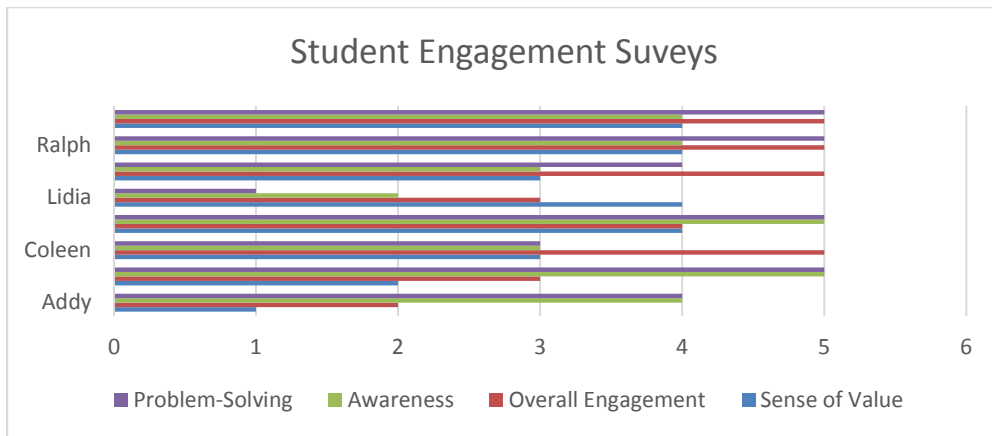


Figure 4.6 Individual results of student engagement survey.

The results from these surveys that PjBL had a significant impact on overall student engagement in class, with the heaviest impact on overall engagement.

### Qualitative Analysis

**Student reflection forms.** I collected data from the responses to daily student reflection forms (Appendix C), which captured the students' perspectives on progressive activities. The survey included five open-ended questions as well as an additional comment section which allowed students to elaborate on ideas or challenges that they were encountering during the PjBL activities. The questions were intended to explore the students' ideas related to their own progress, enjoyment of the project, collaborative skills, and left an alternative section in order for students to document additional thoughts related to the series of project-based learning activities. As a result of reflection, the students indicated their engagement via functions of level and perception, frequently indicating specific attitudes, behaviors, and experiences. This allowed me to further examine non-observable, subjective, and perceptual indicators of engagement.

**Focus group.** Following the intervention, I conducted semi-structured interviews with four of the participating students via a focus group in order to further examine the



students' attitudes and perceptions of PjBL activities. Of the four purposefully selected students, each was present every day during the intervention, and available to interview during Independent Learning Time (ILT) combined with a lunch period. Following the session, I created a typed transcription of the conversation. As recommended by Efron and Ravid (2014), I then sorted the data into files and created smaller units to later decipher meanings. This type of coding allowed me to document repetitions, thought patterns, and recurring themes in the students' responses. I then reviewed the codes and documented categories and overarching themes that specifically related to the effects of project-based learning on student engagement.

### **Qualitative Findings**

From the reflections and focus group, the following themes emerged and are supported by the participants' responses:

1. Capitalizing on peer engagement opportunities
2. Self-direction through time management, ownership of work, and problem-solving
3. Demonstration of confidence in the target language

#### **Capitalizing on Peer Engagement Opportunities**

Included in the many factors that can encourage student engagement through PjBL activities Larmer, Mergendoller, and Boss (2015) highlight that, in a well-designed project, the peer collaboration component provides students the opportunity to further express themselves and make effective autonomous and collaborative decisions. A unique aspect of this project was that students sometimes worked with individuals in the class with whom they normally did not frequently collaborate. Yet, five of the eight

participants mentioned on a minimum of 3 of the surveys that the most impact stemmed from collaboration in selecting the topic and the final project creation. Despite the majority of the comments being laconic and basic, the students' enjoyment of working with their partners and their learned skills was evident through some of the elaborated comments made by three of the students. Colleen, who worked with a near-native speaker, stated:

I really liked working with Lidia. I know that her French is better than mine, so I ask her all the time for help. I don't think I would have been able to come up with some of the things on my own, and she really did help me through the process.

She was really nice about it, too.

Lidia, despite claiming in three initial reflection forms that she did not feel as if her progress was adequate, responded to two questions later that her and her partners' work was "coming along", and directly stated, "I feel better about what we're doing. We're actually almost finished." This statement indicates Lidia's shift in perspective that took place during the project. In Lidia's final student reflection, she mentioned that Colleen "seemed kind of surprised that that's what happens in France and we kept talking about it and laughed about it a lot." Lidia indicated through this statement that she was compelled to share her cultural experiences with her partner. Colleen took advantage of Lidia's eventual willingness, demonstrated through her comment: "She knows everything, and when I read in French and she translates, it makes it so much easier."

As a reinforcement of this idea, Lidia, during the final two student surveys indicated an increased sense of benefit from the collaborative components, noting that she was more satisfied with her progress, and had learned to relinquish some of the control. Lidia

stated: “I let her take over some of the slides and she really knew what she was doing. She later expressed: “We’re working well together. She’s practicing her reading and I’m helping her translate some things.” This enlightenment demonstrates that Lidia’s initial decision to hold herself individually accountable and disregarding her partner’s input was not helpful. She realized, perhaps unknowingly, that her initial reaction to the project led to ineffective collaboration, and that her experience could be enhanced through social problem-solving and that sharing knowledge construction can be mutually beneficial.

Equally, Ginny claimed to have had a positive experience, and stated that she also learned how to relinquish some of her responsibilities throughout their tasks. She stated directly on one of her student reflections:

He is really bringing some good ideas to the table. I was worried that I was going to do all of the work, but this isn’t the case. We work well together and because he likes technology so much, he showed me a few things (even in the language) that I wasn’t aware of.

Ginny’s partner, Terry, commented in a very informal statement, “She’s teaching me a bunch of stuff about my French and I’m teaching her a bunch of stuff about technology.” This statement indicates the positive experience of sharing knowledge throughout the process of PjBL activities.

Contrarily, on two occasions, there were conflicting reports on the students’ perceptions of engagement. Addy, who on four accounts on her reflection form noted that she did not feel as if she and her partner were making significant gains, took minimal advantages to note information on the comment section. However, her partner Annabel, a member of the focus group, claimed “I could not have done what she did without

Addy's help.” Additionally, Annabel claimed on every form that she felt as if her progress was adequate and even supported her ideas by stating in the focus group:

She helped me out when we got stuck on things and encouraged me to keep going. In the beginning I didn't feel like doing much. Part of me really enjoyed what we were doing, but I also didn't want to let her down.

Despite the contradictions in perceptions, Addy found advantages in completing the collaborative components, and, although her motivation was extrinsically stemmed from not wanting to disappoint her partner, she claims to have found a greater need to persevere through the activities.

Addy also claimed that she and Annabel were collaboratively engaged in the target language, despite at some points being disengaged during some instructional periods. Addy claimed on one of the two comment sections she completed: “We didn't get much done today, but we talked in French about some other things that were going on. We decided that we would work on it later today. We have a plan.” Whereas Addy's reflection did demonstrate her lack of motivation for the day, she maintained conversations in the target language throughout the duration of the class, and due to the established collaborative skills was able to communicate with her partner and modify their plan as needed.

Furthermore, Francis and four of his classmates noted, nearly daily, that “working in groups” was the component they enjoyed the most about the project. There were also five reflection forms that included notes regarding the enjoyment of the collaborative experience through peer correction and assistance with reading comprehension. This type of peer support captured the benefits of this experience. Francis informally noted on

one of his reflections: “He helped me with a lot of words he didn’t get, and I explained some of the history stuff to him.” His partner, Ralph, consistently claimed that felt confident in his progress, and used collaborative technology in order to reinforce vocabulary acquisition. He noted in a reflection comment: “We made good progress today. We made some vocabulary lists yesterday and shared a Google Doc. It made it a lot easier to get through.” Ralph, another member of the focus group, that this collaboration with Francis was “got him through the project.” Ralph directly stated:

I know that I helped him with his French a lot, and I always made sure to correct his pronunciation. I did not know half of the things he was talking about, though, when we were looking for articles. We have taken history classes together before, and I didn’t know he knew that much. I mean, he knew about wars and battles that I had never even heard of, and I didn’t know anything about French colonialization in Africa. I guess I’m more of a language guy than a history guy.

As Francis realized Ralph’s strength in language ability, he claims to have capitalized on his partner’s abilities, while noting the benefits of his partner’s contributions. He claimed during the focus group: “It gets a lot easier. The articles make sense if you really pay attention to what they’re trying to say and when you have a human dictionary sitting next to you.”

As project based learning requires students to collaboratively take initiative and benefit from each other’s knowledge (Kokotssaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016), the students, through their own reflections, noted that the collaborative component to this activity allowed them to relinquish some control and rely on their classmates to guide them through situations of confusion or uncertainty. Equally as relevant was the

transition to a positive outlook by students, some of whom seemed demonstrated ambivalent attitudes during the introduction to project-based learning. These themes are documented and discussed below. Direct quotes, formal and informal, are noted in order to demonstrate accuracy.

**Self-direction through time management, ownership of work, and problem-solving.** Despite being reminded throughout schooling that self-management techniques are an integral part of a solid learner profile, the students were further encouraged at the beginning of the course that time management is an integral component to language learning. Additionally, PjBL, according to Kokotsaki, Menzies, and Wiggins (2016), requires that students learn management skills in order to effectively navigate through associated assignments related to project-based learning activities. Self-direction skills equally entail taking initiative and ownership of work and understanding the need to prioritize and manage time (Tekkol & Demiril, 2018). Several students throughout the course of this project noted that they were successful in time management, although was one of the most difficult barriers to surmount. The students also demonstrated self-direction, either autonomously or collaboratively, as a result of taking ownership of their own learning.

***Time management.*** When I asked the four members of the focus group how this activity differed from traditional assignments in language courses, three of the four students agreed that this unit required them to maintain focus and to self-direct when getting off task. Ralph, during the focus group, was already cognizant of his previous weaknesses, and stated directly when asked about the challenges of PjBL:

We have to do this sometimes in one of my history classes. I learned that you have to work in and outside of class if you want to keep up with everything. But it's really not a pain if you like what you're doing.

Ralph's partner, Francis, also realized that he and his partner had struggled with this skill in the past, and directly stated during the focus group:

We knew from the beginning that we were both procrastinators and when looking at the final assignment, we knew that wasn't going to cut it this time. We made a calendar and made sure that we stuck to it every day.

Francis also noted through a perceived "confession" on one of his daily reflection forms that he and Ralph had "fallen down a rabbit hole" in class that day and had to make the choice to change topics as a result of the complexity of their initial subject. He stated:

I really wanted to keep researching Charles de Gaulle and the Algerian conflict, but it would have taken too long to research, explain, and then do our creation project. I really don't think that everyone would understand, either. Even with what we picked we knew it was going to take a long time. The vocabulary section alone took us all day.

Ralph, who also participated in the focus group, interrupted his partner and reinforced Francis's revelation by claiming:

Yeah, that was too much. I knew that he already knew a lot about it, but we could take a whole (semester) class on that. We had to be realistic and narrow it down a little. Even with a shorter topic, we pretty much had to work all weekend to get everything done.

Ginny, a member of the focus group, demonstrated her realization of the time constraints. Claiming to be an analytic learner and liking things “a certain way”, she revealed that she did not initially like the project but mentions her adjustment in management techniques and overall satisfaction with her and her partner’s work. Ginny enthusiastically stated:

This was one of the reasons why I didn’t like it at first. I like structure and being told what to do. It’s relatively simple to get a list of vocabulary and study for a quiz or prepare sample questions and answer them. I think that’s why I don’t really like unstructured projects. I know I can make good grades if I study information from a study guide, but it is kind of tricky when you don’t have that guidance. After getting it together, though, we made sure to get everything done ahead of time because we were scared that we were doing something wrong. As it turned out, we finished most of the beginning stuff first and had more time to work on our speaking part. I think everything turned out OK.

Ginny’s partner, Terry, supported Ginny’s comment and highlighted through one of his daily reflections that Ginny had forced him to focus. Terry stated specifically “Ginny makes sure we’re doing everything we need to. She always keeps me on track.” Terry’s comments also identify the benefit of collaborative direction and the transfer of positive management behaviors on peers.

The collaborative nature of the project also seemed to transfer positive engagement behaviors to other students. Addy, who on half of her reflections claimed that she did not feel as if she was making adequate progress, directly motivated her



partner, Annabel, who proclaimed to need more motivation at the beginning of the unit.

Annabel explains in response to a posed question during the focus group:

She kept nagging me to look things up and finally I did. One day I did tons of work and ended up staying during my early-out to work on it. I realized later that our final project was going to take a while, so I made sure to do everything I needed to get ready for it.

Additionally, three students mentioned at points during the focus group session that they had worked on the activities during other classes and frequently stayed during lunch and ILT to finish sections of the project on which they felt needed more work. All four students mentioned that the final product seemed daunting and that they knew upon receipt of the assignment that time-management was going to be challenging. Ralph, who previously mentioned as a student who has had experience with PjBL implied that he and his partner collectively understood the rigor and detailed nature of their selected summative project claimed:

I knew when you gave it to us that it was going to take a while. Preparing a debate takes a lot of work and then when you have to do it in French it makes it more time-consuming. That's why we had our ducks in a row on day one. I made sure he was doing what he was supposed to, too.

His last comment was made humorously, as Francis immediately chimed and claimed, "Hey, I kept you on track, too!" The two students agreed that they had established a sense of accountability, and this recognition implicates that both students perceived that that PjBL had a positive impact on their self-direction, specifically in terms of their ability to manage their time.

**Problem Solving.** The most notable data that indicated that problem solving posed a challenge to the students were collected from student reflection forms. In question two of the reflection form, which asked students what they liked least about the daily activity, students commented mostly on their challenges associated with the discovery of information. The following phrases or sentences emerged at least once throughout the collected forms. Some responses were repeated throughout the sequence. The responses are noted in the order of collection.

Table 4.4 List of student responses

Participant	Comment
Terry	“We got stuck on a sentence we couldn’t figure out.”
Addy	“We couldn’t figure out how to find a site that we needed.”
Addy	“We didn’t know how to say a bunch of these words”
Colleen	“It was impossible to find any reinforcing statistics.”
Lidia	“We had a hard time figuring out another way to say that.”
Terry	“We couldn’t figure out what the abbreviations stood for.”
Annabel	“We were unsure of how to proceed when our site didn’t work.”
Annabel	“It was tricky to figure out what it actually meant, even though we knew the words.”
Francis	“We got bogged down in trying to figure out the names of the leaders.”
Ginny	“It was hard to articulate their point of view.”

Ralph	“We didn’t get it.” (in reference to a regional video with varying dialects)
Francis	“We couldn’t manage to find out the equivalent.”

Consequently, during the focus group, I followed up on some of these responses, as one of the focus group questions was designed to explore the students’ dislikes about the PjBL unit.

During the focus group, Annabel and Ralph commented on their initial struggle in finding the correct words or phrases to include in their final production piece. Annabel and Francis mentioned during the focus group that they had somewhat become dependent on the teacher for direction and assistance with vocabulary, and found it challenging in the beginning to discover expressions independently. Directly following, the other two confirmed their statement by a simple “Yes.” When specifically asked about problems encountered throughout the experience, all four students mentioned, either directly or indirectly, that they were sometimes unsure as to how to proceed when they could not determine certain language structures or how to find related vocabulary. All four of the students, however, commented on how either they or their partner eventually discovered sites and references besides machine translation tools that assisted them with acquisition without prompting from the teacher.

Annabel stated during the focus group that that she and her partner “got stuck a lot and wanted to ask you how to say stuff. We finally figured it out, though.” She equally noted that she and her partner had learned to alter their dependence on paper dictionaries and asking the teacher for help. In the focus group she mentioned the discovery of authentic French reference sites. During a follow-up question pertaining to

how she overcame certain obstacles, she directly stated “Through *WordReference* and *Larousse.fr*, we managed. We even looked through some of the forums to find out how native speakers formulated some questions. Sometimes we didn’t understand, but it was interesting to see the comments.

Francis noted that that through learned navigation of authentic resources, that he and his partner were able to explore diverse francophone sites:

We ended up finding so much information on this one Moroccan site and found some lists of expressions they use in informal situations. We kind of got off track and made fun of some of the expressions, but it was cool to see how they said it. In the end, we learned how to look at some of the sites and figure out almost everything we needed to.

Ginny, who expressed some frustration on two of her initial reflection forms about not being able to find supporting information, managed, with her partner’s assistance, to navigate through certain authentic sites. She elaborated during the focus group:

Between me and my partner we knew how to find what we needed. Terry found this awesome list from a website that taught us how to use formal questioning when interviewing someone, so we used that structure to help guide the final product. We even watched a couple of videos.

Concurring with Ginny, Terry mentioned on two of his reflection forms the direct generic expressions, “We figured it out”, indicating the team’s ability to overcome barriers in their learning experience.

***Ownership of work.*** Throughout the focus group, the most common broached theme was the enjoyment of the topic selection. According to Chan et al. (2014), supporting student ownership based on personal interest is an effective method in improving student engagement and achievement. In addition to mentioning the metacognitive skills learned throughout the course of the unit, all of the students in the focus group either inferred or directly mentioned how the liberty of selecting their own topic added to the positive experience of the learning process.

Francis stated during the focus group that his interest in history and cultural events was one of the driving forces of the project. He directly stated:

We like history and current events and I was kind of done with all the lessons on art and literature. We chose to talk about the economic crisis and manifestations in Lebanon because we had talked about it some in one of my history classes. We found our sources from *l'Orient-Le Jour* and we ended up finding probably too much information. It was fun to read though, and we went with it even though we knew some of our classmates wouldn't know what was going on.

Annabel felt engaged through her investigation and equally noticed cultural connections through her investigation. She exclaimed:

I loved the articles and videos we chose because I had no idea that French teenagers were so obsessed with some of the same things we are! I didn't know that you had to be 18 to drive in France and that you have to go to school first. I also liked that French teenagers are just as obsessed with fashion as I am.

Ginny, who was initially contentious with Terry, finally agreed on a topic after claiming that "We argued over which topics to choose, but we were interested in the same things,

so it really didn't matter if we had to go with his choice. I mean, everybody likes their phones, right?"

Some of the most poignant comments made throughout the process of the focus group was how students willingly and enthusiastically worked outside of class due to their enjoyment of their selected topics and the pride they had in their work. During the focus group, Francis and Ginny elaborated on their interests and informed me that they had spent significant time either on Facetime or Google Hangouts with their partner to either practice and discuss their topic, or to prepare for their final presentation. These unprompted interactions were, according to the students, accredited to their topic choice, and their enthusiasm for their personal subject. This was evident in Francis's comment about engagement in the target language:

We switched our phones to French so that texting was easier, and we practiced over Facetime a good bit, too. It was also fun trying to pronounce some of the Arabic words in our articles, and since we didn't know how to say them, we just said them with a French accent.

Ginny and Terry demonstrated a further interest in their selected topic, technology and mass media, and discussed unprompted interactions. During the focus group, Ginny stated:

Terri and I used Google Hangouts a few times so that we could practice our pronunciation. Normally we wouldn't worry about it so much, but since we had our production piece at the end, we knew we'd better practice a little more. Google Hangouts was fun because we learned some of the terminology that was affiliated with our articles. We learned how to say things like "couper le son"

(mute), and “Ça coupe.” (You’re breaking up). It felt good to be able to maintain conversations and actually say what we wanted to say, especially when there isn’t any pressure to get it totally right.

Whereas this leads to further questions about the effect of PjBL on actual language acquisition, it is evident through this statement that the selected topic stimulated additional motivation to that led to further investigation and interest-driven unprompted social interactions.

***Demonstration of confidence in the target language.*** During the focus group, I noted that two of the students made reference to the confidence they maintained when working with their partners during their informal speaking moments during class. Higher confidence in one’s abilities, according to Hannon (2014), tends to lead to more engagement and may result in higher academic performance. Reflecting on my problem of practice, which specifically notes the students’ reluctance to speak the target language in class, I capitalized on the experience by asking students to elaborate on specific comments related to informal interactions made during class. Two students noted that the navigation in the target language was more challenging than in traditional activities, yet three students commented positively on their experiences in informal classroom interactions. All three comments directly related to their perceived confidence and willingness to speak if not always proctored by the teacher or other classmates. According to Francis, the associated activities allowed him to speak freely with his partner and other classmates, without the general fear of making mistakes in French. Francis commented, “We felt good about what we were doing because we were sure that we know more about this than anyone else. It made it a lot easier to talk because if we

made mistakes, nobody would notice.” When I prompted Terry to elaborate on his enjoyment of the activities, he explained:

It was so much easier talking to Ginny during the smaller activities because we weren’t scared of making mistakes in front of the other students, especially Lidia who lived in France. We also liked that you weren’t hovering over us listening for mistakes and that we didn’t have to worry about other people not understanding us. I also don’t work with Ginny very much, and I learned a lot from what she was saying and would ask her if I didn’t understand something. I wouldn’t normally do that in class.

During the same line of questioning, Ralph stated:

At some point I would stop worrying about everything and just smile and talk. It didn’t really matter if I was right all the time because I was understood. I mean, I think my French is pretty good, but sometimes I won’t say things if I don’t know for sure if it’s right. At some point, though, I just stopped caring about that.

When prompted to elaborate on a question pertaining to the final component, two other students, Ginny and Annabel, who both indicated that they were initially nervous about the sequence of activities because of lack of structure, commented on their experiences with language production during their summative assessments. Ginny noted:

I threw away my notecard half-way through because people were asking me questions that weren’t always related to our first article. This was so weird because I always stick to my script, but I didn’t really have a choice. We kept talking, though, and I knew I made mistakes but kept going



anyway. Everyone seemed to get it, so I just kept going. I think I talked too much sometimes, and we ended up talking for the rest of the class.

Annabel demonstrated confidence in her preparation, and also claims to have taken risks in her language production during the summative assessment. Annabel said specifically:

I felt really good during the last activity because I knew the vocabulary and knew everything that was going on. I didn't say everything I wanted to say, but I tried to say things even if I knew I was going to mess up. I knew she wouldn't judge me, and she helped me remember.

Annabel, when asked to reflect on her summative piece, commented that she and Addy rarely looked at the slides they had presented. She stated that she understood her topic and that she felt good enough in her language ability to "go around what she was trying to say to get her point across." Her comment infers that she is capable of appropriate circumlocution in conversational language, which is noted to be an indicator of higher-level fluency that requires confidence in one's abilities (Swain, 1980).

When I asked Francis to elaborate on his experiences during the class activities and during the summative component, he responded, in reference to the class activities: "That wasn't a problem for us. We always speak French in class." After I prompted him to discuss his final production piece, Francis stated "Well, we decided to wing the final discussion piece because we knew what we were talking about." Despite the fact that Francis's comment may appear to indicate a lack of preparation, based on Francis's and Ralph's previous comments about their increased work ethic, Francis and Ralph demonstrated an added confidence in their ability to maneuver through language without use of their reference materials.

### **Triangulation of findings for RQ2**

The quantitative findings for the engagement survey indicate that 75% of students believed that project-based learning had a positive impact on their overall level of engagement, and 62.5% of students claimed that it had positive impact on their problem-solving skills. The data indicated that the students' perceptions of awareness had at least a minimal impact on their engagement throughout the project, as indicated by the students' responses. Despite subtle variations among student responses, there is a clear demonstration that project-based learning had at least a minimal positive impact on the students' engagement in all of the aforementioned domains.

The qualitative data collected from the student reflection surveys and the responses of the focus group determined that students took initiative and capitalized on peer engagement opportunities. The students noted in several occasions, through direct narrative, that they benefitted from partner guidance, accountability, acceptance of peer feedback, and other students' prior knowledge of language and culture. Students also noted that they had established peer autonomy as a result of numerous and enhanced collaborative opportunities.

An increase in self-management skills was another positive impact of project-based learning. The students reported specific examples of occasions when they were challenged with time management and problem-solving, leading them to search for possible solutions to refine research techniques and discover resources without directly seeking guidance from others. Additionally, the students demonstrated ownership of their work, as they reported that their choice of topic instigated a greater desire to learn more about the language and culture, making more solid connections with the curriculum.

Students equally demonstrated higher confidence levels as result of PjBL. The students reported their confidence most specifically in their ability to produce the language without the use of reference materials and in their attempts to manage circumlocution when not knowing the direct translation of a word or phrase. The students also demonstrated higher levels of confidence, as they found themselves relinquishing their fears of making mistakes in the target language. The students began focusing more so on their conveyance of message rather than grammatical structures and overall language correctness.

### **Links to Research Questions and Overall Triangulation**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the following two research questions:

1. What are the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills in the intermediate world language classroom?
2. What are the effects of project-based learning on student engagement in the intermediate world language classroom?

The questions were designed and guided by my problem of practice, which states that students are often reluctant to engage and use the target language interactively in intermediate classes. I reviewed the existing literature regarding the curriculum, language acquisition theory and motivational theory, and chose project-based learning as test its potential impact on interactive skills and engagement. I drew several conclusions from the data I collected that relate to the questions that drove this study.

### **Overall Effects of PjBL**

The results from the pre- and post-test indicated that there was significant growth in the overall interactive speaking skills in the target language. After analysis of the

quantitative data, I can conclude that the intervention had more of an impact on Criterion B: Student Interaction and Receptive Skills. This sub-skill maintains a focus on student interaction and listening comprehension, which indicates that the majority of the students made significant gains in their ability to comprehend the spoken language among their peers and via authentic texts. Though these are somewhat considered passive skills in foreign language learning, they remain an integral part of language learning, as Hammer (2001) states that the ability to speak a language fluently does not only assume the features of knowledge, but equally skills for processing information. The qualitative data somewhat reinforced these results through the connections made through the target culture. The students retrieved and retained certain information from a variety of written, visual, and auditory stimuli, allowing them to further comprehend the target language through discovery.

The increased level of student engagement reinforces the positive impact of this experience. With the high level of engagement that the students reported as a result of this PjBL unit, students were, overall, active participants throughout the learning experience leading to overall success on the student-selected assessment component. With an exception of one student who did not make gains in her abilities as a result of the intervention, fifty percent of students who claimed that that PjBL had a substantial impact on their engagement also increased their interactive skills in the target language.

The quantitative data indicated that the students made fewer overall gains in language production. Contrarily, the qualitative data indicated that the students, through their engagement with numerous stimuli, improved higher-level language functions including self-scaffolding to master, or at least attempt, advanced grammar structures.

The data also indicated that students were more prone to adopting more informal expressions, such as colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions, incorporating them into their L2 lexicons and reproducing expressions later through informal interactions. An area of interest is the impact of PjBL on male students, as Francis, Ralph, and Terry were among the four students who made the most notable progress throughout the process. These three students specifically were also the students who reported that PjBL had a more significant impact on their overall engagement and problem-solving skills in the target language.

Furthermore, the link between problem-solving and language skills were also apparent through the findings of this study. There were numerous accounts of students reporting their troubles with access to information, most specifically as they pertained to finding the appropriate vocabulary, understanding portions of auditory or written text, or understanding the language through context. Yet, students reported finding methods to solve these problems during their discovery of francophone sites, gaining knowledge through assistance from their peers, and re-directing attention to other various sources when necessary.

One of the most notable of discoveries in this investigation was the emergence of added confidence in abilities in the target language. According to Tridinanti (2018), to effectively communicate in a target language, the speaker must have self-awareness, confidence in his abilities, self-motivation, and positive behavioral patterns. This reinforces the powerful correlation among confidence, motivation, and speaking skills in a target language. Although it is difficult to dispute the importance of grammatically correct language, it is also important to examine competencies in other domains of

linguistics and pragmatics, skills that were demonstrated by some students through their diverse use of language when maneuvering successfully through informal interactions.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the collected data through this mixed-method study examined both quantitative and qualitative inputs and followed methodology that is aligned with action research (Mertler, 2014). This chapter revealed and explained the data from the current research study. The use of data retrieved from pre- and post-assessments, field notes, and reflection surveys allowed me to gather insight as to the overall effects on PjBL on the students' interactive skills. Data collected from the student engagement surveys, student reflections, and the responses from a focus group afforded me the opportunity to analyze the effects of this PjBL unit on student engagement. I concluded that PjBL had a notable impact in terms of interaction skills in the target language, where the majority of the students increased in their overall achievement, and determined that the students benefited from strengthened language use, made connections to language through target cultures, and demonstrated higher levels of fluency. In terms of engagement, students made advancements in skills that involved self-direction, time-management, problem-solving skills, which were all reinforced by collaboration, one of the key tenets of project-based learning (Kokotsake, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016). The study also concluded that student engagement, the driving force behind PjBL (Thomas, 2000), generally fostered a sense of ownership and had an overall positive influence on student performance. Chapter 5 will further discuss these interpretations and note implications for future practice.

## CHAPTER 5

### ACTION PLAN AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

This chapter includes a discussion of the study's premise, the research focus, a brief overview of the study, a discussion of the major findings, and discussion of future changes. Following is an action plan, implications of the findings, and advice for future research. In Chapters 1-4, I described my experience during the investigation of the effects of project-based learning, and, as prescribed by Mills (2014), have reflected on the process and considered the longevity of action research. The last two stages, according to Mertler (2014) is developing and future reflection, and the researcher must consider next steps in terms of future research and practice. The cyclic nature and intended longevity involved in action research will guide future practice in my own instruction, and perhaps the instruction of other teachers in the world language department. Chapter 5 highlights this in-depth reflection on the action research process and documents plans for the future implementation of project-based learning and alterations of instructional patterns.

#### **Action Research Study Premise**

Action research was the best choice for this project considering my unique role in the school as a teacher and assumer of numerous leadership roles. I am also a practitioner and curriculum leader, whose objective is continuous learning, engagement in formal and informal research, consistently reflecting on practice, and implement practice that will advance student learning and achievement in language courses. As my

role equally involves planning, evaluation, acting, and reflection on practice, I will take advantage of this research and its outcome to inform future practice (Anderson, 2014).

### **Research Focus**

This action research study focused on the effects of project-based learning in an intermediate world language classroom. The study specifically focused on this implementation's effect on interactive speaking skills in the target language, as well as its impact on student engagement. The problem of practice for this study included the reluctance of students to interact fully in the target language and their lack of engagement in activities that require investigation outside of prescribed traditional activities. The problem of practice also described the students' reservations to use the target language out of fear of correctness, resulting in a lack of engagement and interaction. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate a new instructional strategy, project-based learning, and examine its impact on the students' interactive skills and if this practice had an impact on their engagement. The findings indicate that the implementation of a project-based learning unit had a significant impact on the students' interactive skills and promoted student engagement through the collaborative nature of the unit.

### **Overview**

I conducted a convergent parallel mixed-method study that examined the impacts of the intervention on interactive speaking and engagement with twelve students in an Honors French Culture and Civilization course. Of the twelve students, nine were participants in the investigation. Throughout the process of the intervention, I became more confident by reviewing the framework and research conducted by the Buck Institute (2013). The project was based on one of the core themes prescribed by the International



Baccalaureate, and included human ingenuity, social organization, sharing the planet, experiences, and identities. For the first research question, I focused on PjBL's effects on interactive speaking in the target language during a 10-day unit. I collected quantitative and qualitative data to answer this research question. The quantitative data was yielded through a pre- and post- assessment that measured interactive skills in the target language. According to Efron and Ravid (2014), analyzing assessments for student performance can enable teachers to link performance and assessment and can also provide a rich insight to student work. I subsequently analyzed the data descriptively and inferentially through a *t*-test in order to determine mean, standard deviation, and accompanying narrative.

To further investigate the impacts of PjBL on interactive speaking skills, I collected qualitative data from two collection instruments, observational field notes and student reflection forms. According to Efron and Ravid (2014) direct observation can reveal patterns and illuminate possibilities unnoticed in normal classroom life. Equally, student reflections on progress can allow the researcher to intimately know how participants perceive certain issues. Following data collection, I began to recognize themes within datasets (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) which were reviewed and discussed with a veteran colleague to increase reliability. I collected both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the second research question with the intention of investigating the effects of PjBL on student engagement throughout the course of the intervention. I used a piloted survey to collect quantitative data at the conclusion of the activities that reflected student engagement in terms of its sense of value, problem-solving skills,

overall engagement, and awareness. I then analyzed the data and provided a descriptive analysis of the results.

I also collected data from two qualitative instruments, including student reflection forms and the transcription of interviews that I conducted through a focus group (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The data collected through these two instruments allowed me to better understand the students' perspectives and attitudes of the PjBL unit through the analysis of rich narratives provided during the focus group and students' thoughts portrayed on their reflection forms.

### **Discussion of Findings and Major Points**

The first research questions explored the impact of PjBL on interactive speaking in the world language classroom. Through the data I collected from the students' pre- and post-test scores, it was evident that project-based learning had a significant impact on interactive speaking in the target language. Through the data I collected through the qualitative instruments, I used in vivo coding to determine codes and categories, which I then developed prominent themes. Consequently, I determined that project-based learning had a positive impact on interactive language, specifically in terms of connections in language through culture, advanced grammar use, and fluency in the target language. Students, therefore, demonstrated growth in their level of understanding across all data sources.

The second research question examined the impact of PjBL on student engagement in the world language classroom. Through the quantitative data I collected from the student surveys, the students demonstrated a higher engagement as a result of the PjBL unit. More specifically, the data indicated that the students perceived that the

associated activities were more beneficial than traditional instruction in terms of overall engagement, the development of problem-solving skills, and the sense of value of the project. The qualitative data that I received from answers to the focus group questions and student reflection forms showed that PjBL had a significant impact on engagement skills, specifically in the areas of the capitalization of peer engagement opportunities, self-direction, and confidence in their language abilities. After reflection, there were several other questions that emerged as a result of data interpretation. Reflecting on these problems assisted me in creating an action plan. Suggestions for future research are also included in this chapter.

Understanding that student-centered approaches and modern constructivist teaching strategies have encountered much resistance (Loveless, 2013). With the emerging research that highlights the benefits of project-based teaching and learning, among the strongest include the potential for students to experience meaningful engagement and develop skills that can be applied across content areas (Boss & Larmer, 2018). In terms of language instruction, there remains a sustained focus on textbooks and prescribed classroom resources, yet researchers such as Eisenchlas (2011) show that the language that students receive from traditional sources contain less authentic language than what native speakers actually use. Gilmore (2007) holds that authentic resources can also enhance student learning through drawing cultural and language parallels. These understandings led me to the following questions that may merit future investigation:

1. How can the PjBL model be implemented in a language program that is reluctant to change traditional language-learning methods

2. How can the PjBL model be implemented in a language program that is reluctant to change traditional language-learning methods?
3. How can students' inquiry skills be more enhanced through the discovery of authentic francophone resources?
4. What alterations in the development and implementation could be made in order to better assist students?
5. How can we increase the students' awareness of skills throughout the process of PjBL?
6. Can the evidence from increased engagement and self-direction skills be transferred into other content areas, encouraging other educators to adopt more constructivist classroom models?

From the results and implications from my investigation, I created the following action plan chart:

<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To encourage the adoption of effective student-centered models in world language classrooms</li> <li>-To further share the benefits of PjBL across content areas</li> <li>-To ensure that all students have the technology required to effectively complete associated activities</li> <li>-To further develop student self-management skills that are widely applicable</li> <li>-To enrich the curriculum and to allow for more time for students to develop inquiry skills and language production skills.</li> </ul>
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<b>Recommended Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Present findings and model plans at World Language Department meetings</li> <li>-Advocate for Professional Learning Communities (PLC) among IB teachers</li> <li>-Incorporate lessons on self-direction within the existing curricula</li> </ul>
<b>Responsible Parties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-World Language teachers</li> <li>-IB Teachers</li> <li>-IB Coordinator</li> <li>-Media Specialists</li> <li>-Administration</li> </ul>
<b>Data Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data that supports student-centered models</li> <li>- Research and information that reinforces traits of the IB Learner Profile</li> <li>- Research on the benefits of teaching self-direction</li> <li>- Research that indicates the advantages of supplementary L2 courses in school curricula</li> </ul>

<p><b>Required Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Curriculum planners and daily lesson plans</li> <li>-Financial support on a local, state, and/or national level</li> <li>-Consistent WiFi access</li> <li>-Allotted time through professional development</li> <li>-Shared access to IB resources</li> <li>-Chromebooks and/or laptop computers</li> </ul>
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Figure 5.1 Action Plan

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) suggest that well-designed PD should be interpreted as an essential component of teaching and learning if students are to be successful in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. In recent years, especially considering numerous curricular changes and resource distribution within the district, middle school language programs expressed the need to align certain curricular items with the high school. In collaboration with other district teachers at the middle and high school levels, teachers have discussed the need for more hands-on and constructivist approaches, especially in exploratory and beginner (Level 1) language courses. Despite many veteran teachers' dependency on traditional techniques that require rote memory and the perfection of grammatical structures, newer educators are more open-minded to facilitate student-centered approaches in the classroom. Although a slow progression of these activities may be necessary, the presentation of data collected this study in addition to recent language studies presented by ACTFL (2016), it is highly likely that teachers may become more open-minded as to what instructional models can be effectively facilitated in the world language classroom.

With the recent implementation in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in 2017, curriculum leaders, including department heads and administrators, have encouraged frequent meetings among teachers within departments, across programs such as AP and IB, and dual enrollment courses. Equally, during the 2018-2019 school year, PLCs became more inclusive of cross-instructional models, where teachers from different content areas collaborated to plan and implement lessons across numerous curricula. There are numerous benefits to the correct implementation and sustainment in PLCs, as, according to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), “learning in a community can be a source of efficacy and confidence in the process of adopting new practices” (p. 18). However, PLCs throughout the school year have lost structure and accountability, leading PLCs to become a banal component to the school day. With a more solid framework and accountability measures, PLCs have the potential to be more successful. With a more acute focus on student learning, new teaching strategies, such as the implementation of student-centered learning, should be the highlight of discussion among all educators, and certain PLCs could be specifically designated to planning and implementing more constructivist techniques.

During the first semester of the 2019-2020 school year, a PLC was formed to specifically address the needs of students enrolled in International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Embedded in the suggested IB Curriculum Guide (2018), IB students should be principled thinkers and communicators, and should develop higher-order inquiry skills through collaboration and innovative technologies. The collaborative and technology-centered nature of PjBL lends itself to this belief, and, through more modern and effective practices, students can more aptly conform to the ideals of the IB learner profile.

As technology is one of the key necessary resources in project-based learning (Buck Institute, 2016), it is essential, especially during potential shifts to *e-learning*, that each student have access to reliable Internet and appropriate devices. Johnson et al. (2016) assert that lack of access to technology is one of the largest hinderances in modern education. Schools and districts have already made strides in offering technology tools to students. In March of 2020, the local school district offered all students access to Chromebooks or iPads to further assist them with on-line coursework. However, given that the state of South Carolina consists of bucolic areas without access to Internet, it is imperative that all students have access to Wifi on a consistent basis. The information retrieved from this research project requires collaboration and inquiry through numerous electronic sources, thus requiring access for all students.

Despite our school offering courses that focus on self-direction through time-management, inquiry skills, and appropriate technology use through the International Baccalaureate Program. Students outside of this program remain somewhat maladapted to certain strategies that are required for successful learning through collaborative techniques. As the engagement results from this research project indicate advancements in student engagement, specifically in terms of self-management, the school could create additional courses or integrate these themes to already existing curricula. According to Johnson (2013), most curricula for teaching self-direction skills in a school setting rely on consistent use and evaluation. As our school already has established classes, such as Advisory and Freshman Focus that highlight the importance of these skills, there is further need of evaluation and training for educators of those courses to ensure that



students are exposed to certain strategies and techniques at the beginning of their secondary education experience.

The final step of the action plan had previously gained momentum, with the addition of an AP Spanish Language course, and drafting of pilot plans for AP French, Spanish Heritage courses, and a course entitled *Language Learning for Students with Exceptionalities*. In addition to the glaring research that asserts that learning a second language improves overall reading abilities, correlates to higher academic achievement on standardized test measures, and can provide greater self-efficacy (ACTFL, 2015), Horn and Kojaku (2001) indicate the positive impact of supplemental high school language courses on post-secondary achievement. Understanding that PjBL has a significant impact on interactive speaking abilities in the target language, students could benefit for the application of these acquisition skills to cultivate their understanding of the language and culture by the application of presentational and interactive modes of communication (College Board, 2019).

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

From the results of this action research study, it is important to note its implications for future research. According to Mertler (2014) included in the final step of the action research cycle is reflection and future planning. Despite the fact that the results of this project were positive and encouraging, the study leaves more room for future research in both language acquisition, production and receptive skills in the target language and student engagement.

In terms of student interaction in the target language, whereas the students' post-assessments demonstrated significant growth, it is still somewhat unclear as to all of the

elements of PjBL that affected achievement, and on what specific skills they had the most impact. As the definition of interactive speaking abilities remains broad and subjective, future inquiries could investigate the effects of student-centered techniques on more refined topics, such as informal speaking abilities v. formal construction. Additionally, there are many dimensions of advanced language use, which include other skill sets such as receptive and listening comprehension skills and reading comprehension skills. Future studies could include a focus on these skill sets as well. Further, based on the results from the qualitative instruments pertaining to interactive speaking, a myriad of syntax, phonetic, and semantic structures emerged were not thoroughly researched due to their linguistic complexity. Future studies could provide keener insight on the effects of instructional methods more aligned with linguistics.

As higher-level language abilities span throughout other skill sets such as presentational speaking, presentational and interactive writing, and listening comprehension, it would be mutually beneficial to see the effects of this constructivist technique in these areas as well. Another skill set and defined core competency (ACTFL, 2018) lies within cultural interaction and connections to native cultures, I could more effectively investigate the impact of PjBL on the establishment, maintenance, and advancement of these connections and developing acquisition skills. The critical examination of francophone traditions, influence of the media, geography, and religion, and personal experiences, all student-selected themes through their investigations, could further highlight more of the complex factors that link culture, society, and language.

In addition, in order to strengthen a similar study, I would also be more attentive as to the selection of participants and what level of language learner they represent. As I

conducted research solely within an elective intermediate course, this course was actually designed to include advanced beginners of language, intermediate students, and low advanced language learners. The sample, therefore, was incredibly diverse and lacked some transferability to leveled language courses, such as French for Mastery (Levels 1 and 2), or French for Fluency (Levels 4 and 5). Also, in terms of sampling, matching participants in terms of abilities or level could reveal a more valid results (Creswell, 2014). This would strengthen leveled curriculum and establish more level-appropriate tasks, making the findings more transferable and useful for other language instructors, most of whom teach lower-level language courses.

In reporting on the effects of PjBL on student engagement, although the study proved positive results, I would provide a more comprehensive definition of engagement that includes emotional, behavioral, as well as cognitive engagement. This could provide more insight on the students' overall perception of PjBL and determine their sense of belonging with the project and their perceptions of its value. Equally as important is the teachers' perspective concerning the implementation of PjBL. Of the many challenges that teachers face with designing and implementing PjBL, time management, many teachers indicate their dissatisfaction of using PjBL activities because of their perceived need to accelerate through the curriculum (Pecore, 2013), and their lack of control when wanting to offer student assistance. Further investigation further exploring teachers' attitudes may lead to the additional support that teachers will need in order to more efficiently navigate through PjBL. This is clearly depended on initial teacher buy-in, the current culture of the school, and the resources necessary to make adjustments in instructional practices.

Finally, a future research study could examine the effects of PjBL throughout the duration of their high school language career. Understanding that this was a simple snapshot of its effects, PjBL has the capability of expanding through other language courses, beginning to advanced, and research to discover the longitudinal effects would be valuable in order to determine the development of skills throughout the process.

### **The Uncertainty of the Future of Education**

As a result of the recent pandemic, many educators are still struggling with many questions of its future impact on education. Teachers have been forced to, in a very short amount of time, re-direct instructional models, (self-) train to use sometimes unfamiliar technology tools, and follow whimsical directives regarding planning, implementation, and assessment. Clearly, with the shift to already established remote learning instructional models, educators will have to re-examine traditional methods and adapt to a new definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Reflecting on the changes that I was forced to make during this transition, I was led to the following question about social and cultural constructivist techniques:

How can the developed skills developed throughout the PjBL process be transferred to online learning?

Although there is much uncertainty about what the future of all aspects of education will look like, it is certain that there will be increased professional development, either in-person or remote, that will aid teachers in identifying strategies that will prove to be effective on an on-line platform. As certain students throughout the study reported their discovery of online resources, and the unprompted use of platforms such as Google Hangouts and Zoom, exploring different ways to facilitate these

modalities will be another driving force behind the planning involved in professional development as well as implementation in future practice.

As educational institutions are being restructured world-wide, there are several urgent and lingering questions as to the future of education. Relying on what we know about remote education is important now more than ever, considering that what was considered an alternative, may become conventional. Consequently, it is important to cling to research and educational practices that have proven to be effective with an understanding that global crises sometimes give way to further creativity, innovation, and new methodologies.

### **Conclusion**

This convergent parallel mixed-method action research study investigated the effects of project-based learning on interactive speaking skills and student engagement in the intermediate language classroom. This study was motivated by an acknowledgement that intermediate language students are often reluctant to speak the target language in the classroom setting, thus preventing opportunities to produce and interact within the language. Project-based learning, identified as a constructivist framework with the potential to facilitate further engagement in the classroom, was one of the possible solutions to remedy this problem of practice.

Following action research models (Mertler, 2014; Mills, 2014), I gave the students the opportunity to select their own topics of study, while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the school, state, national, and International Baccalaureate curricula. The study took place in the Fall semester of 2019 at a suburban high school in Charleston, SC. The sample consisted of eight students that varied in terms of gender,

race, and language abilities. The students ranged in age from 15-18 and were all enrolled in an Honors French Cultural Civilization course at the high school. The intervention entailed the creation of an interactive speaking project, whose topic was selected by the students. Using a convergent-parallel design, I used a mixed-methodology approach, allowing me to see different perspectives of each of the research questions.

To answer the first research question, the effects of PjBL on interactive speaking skills in the target language, I used three data instruments including pre- and post-assessment data for quantitative analysis, and observation field notes as well as student reflections for the two qualitative instruments. To answer the second research question, the effects of PjBL on student engagement in the classroom, I also used three data collection instruments. I collected quantitative data through student engagement surveys, and qualitative data from student reflection forms and the transcription derived from semi-structured interviews during a focus group.

After evaluating the data, it was apparent through the analyses of both research questions that students had an overall positive experience with PjBL. The results from the pre- and post-assessments revealed significant growth in interactive speaking abilities, where 7 of the 8 students demonstrated at least minimal growth. Through the interpretation of the data, students demonstrated higher levels of language acquisition as determined by their use of advanced language structures including higher-level grammar, and informal, idiomatic, and colloquial expressions. The students also demonstrated more ease of expression and fluency during the PjBL unit, highlighting the positive effects of PjBL on interactive speaking skills. The students also demonstrated the positive effect that culture can have on language acquisition through establishing connections with the

target language and their own. The students also reported that PjBL had a positive impact on their overall engagement specifically in terms of recognizing the need of time-management skills and finding a sense of value in their work, leading them to take ownership of their own learning. The students also showed higher levels of confidence in their abilities by taking risks in target language and by focusing on communication rather than correctness.

Concludingly, the results of this action research project indicate that the implementation of project-based learning could have a positive impact in world language courses and perhaps in other content areas. After collaboration with a veteran colleague and conversations with members of the school's Leadership Team, I developed a plan of action that includes professional development for world language teachers, restructuring the school's PLC designations, providing appropriate access to technology, and suggestions for adding additional elective language courses to the high school's Program of Studies.

As the definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is rapidly changing, traditional classroom models will prove to be less and less common due to recent circumstances that do not allow for purely face-to-face instruction. Fortunately, as a result of the advancements of online platforms and current studies of the functionalities of remote learning, the useful collaborative components of PjBL will not be lost in the transition. The skills that students demonstrated through this project, such as time-management, independence, and adaptability are all skills that are transferable to e-learning. In a virtual world of education, distance does not prohibit collaboration, and active self-directed learning will remain to be a theme in a new era of education.

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## APPENDIX A

### LESSON PLAN

**Title:** **Vous êtes professeurs** *Français IVH-Culture*  
*Une leçon de votre portfolio personnel – “Une perspective mondiale”*

**Topic:** Preparing, introducing and leading an interactive class discussion on a topic of personal interest with relevance to themes of exploring francophone culture and/or current events.

**Time frame:** 10 Instructional Days

Number of students: 12

**Description of task- Letter to Student:**

While researching your favorite interests for your “*Global Scholar Personal Portfolio*,” you have found the most “striking,” “controversial” or most “disturbing” text and you feel strongly compelled to bring it to the attention of your classmates for a class discussion. Additionally, you will propose a solution to the problem at hand. You are curious to know what your classmates think about this topic and your solution. Will they feel the same way as you? Or, will they have different beliefs or perspectives on this issue? You want to know. You also want to impress them with your facility with the language in the article(s). So, you will become the “professor” for the day... All subjects must be linked to a core theme.

#### **Procedures and timeline for these student-led class lessons**

##### **Tuesday, December 10th    Addy and Annabel**

**will present articles and distribute all assignments: hard copy of the articles, guided vocabulary list, general comprehension questions (5-10), and discussion questions (5 minimum.).**

**\*Work for all:** students will read the article and complete the comprehension and discussion questions.

**Wednesday, December 11th:**

**Addy and Annabel**

will present lesson and lead a class discussion based on the core theme. Students will also administer a level-appropriate quiz based on either the vocabulary or from the textual information. Assignments will be graded and recorded as text-handling activities.

**Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>:**

**Francis and Ralph** will distribute the article along with guided vocabulary, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. \*Work for all: students will read the article and complete the comprehension and discussion questions.

**Thursday : December 12<sup>th</sup>:** **Francis and Ralph** will present lesson and lead a class discussion based on the core theme. Students will also administer a level-appropriate quiz based on either the vocabulary or from the textual information. Assignments will be graded and recorded as text-handling activities.

**Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup>:** **Ginny and Terry** will distribute the article along with guided vocabulary, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. \*Students will have the rest of class to complete the questions and ask questions. \*Work for all: students will read the article and complete the comprehension and discussion questions.

**Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup>:** **No Presentations**

**Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup>:** **Ginny and Terry** will distribute the article along with guided vocabulary, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. \*Work for all: students will read the article and complete the comprehension and discussion questions.

**Monday, December 16th,** **Lidia and Colleen** will present lesson and lead a class discussion based on the core theme. Students will also administer a level-appropriate quiz based on either the vocabulary or from the textual information. Assignments will be graded and recorded as text-handling activities.

**Tuesday, December 17th-** **Lidia and Colleen** will present lesson and lead a class discussion based on the core theme. Students will also administer a level-appropriate quiz based on either the vocabulary or from the textual information. Assignments will be graded and recorded as text-handling activities.

**Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>-** **2 students** will distribute the article along with guided vocabulary, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. \*Work for all: students will read the article and complete the comprehension and discussion questions.

**Wednesday, December 18th-** **2 students** will present lesson and lead a class discussion based on the core theme. Students will also administer a level-appropriate quiz based on either the vocabulary or from the textual information. Assignments will be graded and recorded as text-handling activities.



**Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>- 2 students** will distribute the article along with guided vocabulary, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. \*Work for all: students will read the article and complete the comprehension and discussion questions.

**Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>- 2 students** will present lesson and lead a class discussion based on the core theme. Students will also administer a level-appropriate quiz based on either the vocabulary or from the textual information. Assignments will be graded and recorded as text-handling activities.

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### **Important notes**

- 1. This is an interactive oral activity and must include all students of the class. Students are assessed not only based on their presentations, but their interaction with other students. Each student is expected to speak for at least one minute (total) during others' presentations.**
- 2. You must be adequately prepared for this activity. Late distribution of information will carry negative consequences for you and your classmates. Be prepared.**
- 3. All students must be present for all oral activities. Please remember that this activity is part of the overall unit grade. Your performance affects everyone in the class.**

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### **Sub-Themes (for guidance)**

- Government & Politics
- Global Concerns
- Sports & Leisure
- Cultures and Traditions
- Technology
- The Arts
- Domestic and International Conflicts
- The Power of the Media

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### **Possible authentic sources for students:**

## LA FRANCE

### Le Figaro (French)

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/>

France--Ville de Paris--Paris; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Sports, Science/Technology, Entertainment, Politics, News - National, Business, News - International, Weather

### France-Amerique (French)

<http://www.france-amerique.com/>

France; Weekly

### Libération (French)

<http://www.liberation.fr/>

France--Ville de Paris--Paris; Daily

**Features:** Features/Lifestyles, Entertainment, Arts, Sports, News - National, News - Local

### Le Monde (French)

<http://www.lemonde.fr/>

France--Ville de Paris--Paris;

### Nice-Matin (French)

<http://www.nicematin.fr/>

France--Alpes-Maritimes--Nice; Daily

**Features:** Entertainment, Editorial, Sports, News - National, Weather, News - Local

### Le Nouvel Observateur (French)

<http://quotidien.nouvelobs.com/>

**Features:** Arts, Editorial, Sports, Science/Technology, Entertainment, Politics, News - National, Business, News - International, Weather

### La Provence (French)

<http://www.laprovence-presse.fr/>

France--Provence; Daily

**Features:** News - National, News - International, News - Local

### La République des Pyrénées (French)

<http://www.pyrenees.com/>

France; Daily

**Features:** News - National, News - International, News - Local

## LA BELGIQUE

La Dernière Heure (French)

<http://www.laderniereheure.be/>

Belgium--Bruxelles--Brussels; Daily

**Features:** Entertainment, Arts, Sports, News - National, Business, News - International

La Libre Belgique (French)

<http://www.lalibre.be/>

Belgium--Bruxelles--Brussels; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Sports, News - National, Business, News - International

La Meuse (French)

<http://www.lameuse.be/>

Belgium--Liege--Liege; Daily

**Features:** Features/Lifestyles, Arts, News - National, News - International

Le Soir (French)

<http://www.lesoir.com/>

Belgium--Bruxelles--Brussels ; Daily

## LE LUXEMBOURG

Le Jeudi (French)

<http://www.le-jeudi.lu/>

Luxembourg--Luxembourg--Luxembourg; Weekly

Tageblatt (French)

<http://www.tageblatt.lu/>

Luxembourg--Luxembourg--Luxembourg;

**Features:** Features/Lifestyles, Politics, Sports, News - National, Business, News

## LA SUISSE

dimanche.ch (French)

<http://www.dimanche.ch/>

Switzerland--Vaud--Lausanne; Weekly

a weekly magazine

La Liberté (French)

<http://www.laliberte.ch/>

Switzerland; Daily

Le Matin (French)

<http://www.lematin.ch/>

Switzerland--Vaud--Lausanne; Daily

Le Nouvelliste (French)

<http://www.lenouvelliste.ch/>

Switzerland--Valais--Sion; Daily

**Features:** Features/Lifestyles, Entertainment, Arts, Editorial, Sports, News - Local

Le Temps (French)

<http://www.letemps.ch/>

Switzerland--Geneve--Geneva;

La Tribune de Genève (French)

<http://www.tdg.ch/accueil/>

Switzerland--Geneve--Geneva;

24 Heures (French)

<http://www.24heures.ch/>

Switzerland--Vaud--Lausanne; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Sports, News - National, Business, News - International, News - Local

Webdo (French)

<http://www.webdo.ch/>

Switzerland; Weekly

**Features:** Entertainment, Politics, News - National, Business

## L'ALGÉRIE

Le Matin (French)

<http://www.lematin-dz.com/>

Algeria; Daily

**Features:** Sports, News - National, News - International

El Moudjahid (French)

<http://www.elmoudjahid-dz.com/>

Algeria--El Djazair--Algiers; Daily

**Features:** Editorial, Sports, News - National, News - International, News - Local

Le Quotidien D'Oran (French)

<http://www.quotidien-oran.com/>

Algeria--Wahran--Oran; Daily

**Features:** Sports, News - National, News - International

El Watan (French)

<http://www.elwatan.com/>

Algeria--El Djazair--Algiers; Daily

## LA CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Fraternité Matin (French)

<http://www.fratmat.co.ci/>

Ivory Coast--Abidjan--Abidjan; Daily

**Features:** Editorial, Sports, News - National, Business, News - International

Le Jour (French)

<http://www.lejour.ci/>

Ivory Coast--Abidjan--Abidjan; Daily

**Features:** Sports, News - National, News - International

Notre Voie (French)

<http://www.notrevoie.ci/>

Ivory Coast--Abidjan--Abidjan; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Politics, Sports, News - National, Business, News - International

## LE MADAGASCAR

Madagascar Tribune (French)

<http://www.madagascar-tribune.com/>

Madagascar--Antananarivo--Antananarivo; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Editorial, Sports, News - National, News - Local

Midi Madagasikara (French)

<http://www.dts.mg/midi/>

Madagascar--Antananarivo--Antananarivo; Daily

**Features:** Features/Lifestyles, Politics, News - National, Business

## LA MAURITANIE

L'Express (French)

<http://www.lexpress-net.com/>

Mauritius;

Le Mauricien (French)

<http://www.lemauricien.com/mauricien/>

Mauritius; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Editorial, Sports, News - National, Business

## LE MAROC

Le Matin du Sahara (French)

<http://www.lematin.ma/>

Morocco; Daily

**Features:** Arts, Politics, Sports, News - National, News - International, News - Local

## LA REUNION

Le Journal de l'Ile (French)

<http://www.jir.fr/>

Reunion Island--Reunion--Saint Denis; Daily

## LE SENEGAL

Le Soleil (French)

<http://www.lesoleil.sn/>

Senegal--Dakar--Dakar; Daily

**Features:** Editorial, Sports, News - National, News - International, News - Local

## LA TUNISIE

La Presse de Tunisie (French)

<http://www.tunisie.com/LaPresse/>

Tunisia--Tunis--Tunis; Daily

**Features:** Sports, News - National, News - International, News - Local

La Presse de Tunisie (French)

<http://www.tunisie.com/LaPresse/>

Tunisia--Tunis--Tunis; Daily

**Features:** Sports, News - National, News - International, News - Local

## HAITI

Haiti Progrès (Creoles and pidgins, French-based (Other), English, French)

<http://www.haiti-progres.com/>

Haiti--Ouest--Port-au-Prince; Weekly

**Features:** News - National

## LE LIBAN

L'Orient Le Jour (French)

*<http://www.lorient-lejour.com.lb/>*  
Lebanon--Bayrut--Beirut; Daily

## LA NOUVELLE CALÉDONIE

Les Nouvelles Calédonniennes (French)

*<http://www.lnc.nc/>*  
New Caledonia--Nouvelle-Caledonie--Noumea; Daily  
**Features:** Arts, Politics, Sports, News - National, News - Local

## LE CANADA

Le Devoir (French)

*<http://www.ledevoir.com/>*  
Canada--Quebec--Montreal; Daily

Le Droit (French)

*<http://www.ledroit.com/>*  
Canada--Ontario--Ottawa; Daily  
**Features:** Entertainment, Arts, Editorial, Sports, News - National,  
Deaths/Obituaries, News - Local

La Liberté (French) *<http://journaux.apf.ca/laliberte/>*

Canada--Manitoba; Weekly  
**Features:** Editorial, Sports, News - Local

## APPENDIX B

### INTERACTIVE SPEAKING RUBRIC A

#### **Criterion A: Interactive Speaking: Interactive and Receptive Skills**

*To what extent does the student understand and demonstrate an ability to interact during activities and in conversations?*

-----  
*How well can the student express ideas and opinions?*

-----  
*How well can the student maintain a conversation?*

-----  
**SCORE: 0**

The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors.

**SCORE: 1**

Simple ideas are understood with great difficulty and interaction is very limited.

Simple ideas and opinions are presented incoherently.

The conversation is disjointed.

**SCORE: 2**

Simple ideas are understood with difficulty and interaction is limited.

Simple ideas and opinions are presented with difficulty, sometimes incoherently.

The conversation does not flow coherently.

**SCORE: 3**

Simple ideas are understood fairly well, and interaction is adequate.

Simple ideas and opinions are generally presented clearly.

The conversation flows coherently at times but with some lapses.

**SCORE: 4**

Simple ideas are understood well, and interaction is good.

Simple ideas and opinions are presented clearly and coherently; there is some difficulty with complex ideas.

The conversation generally flows coherently.

**SCORE: 5**

Complex ideas are understood well, and interaction is very good.

Both simple and complex ideas and opinions are generally presented clearly, coherently and effectively.

The conversation flows coherently.



## APPENDIX C

### INTERACTIVE SPEAKING RUBRIC B

#### **Criterion B: Language Production Skills**

*How fluent and clear is the student's speech? How accurate and varied is the language? How much does the student's intonation aid communication?*

##### Assessment Score 1

##### **Command of spoken language is very limited.**

- The production of language is very hesitant and hardly comprehensible.
- Language is often incorrect and/or very limited.
- Intonation interferes seriously with communication.

##### Assessment Score 2

##### **Command of spoken language is limited.**

- The production of language is hesitant and not always comprehensible.
- Language is often incorrect and/or limited.
- Intonation sometimes interferes with communication.

##### Assessment Score 3

##### **Command of spoken language is fairly good**

- The production of language is comprehensible and fluent at times.
- Language is sometimes correct, with some idiomatic expressions.
- Intonation does not interfere seriously with communication.

##### Assessment Score 4

##### **Command of spoken language is good**

- The production of language is mostly fluent.
- Language is generally correct, varied and articulate.
- Intonation contributes to communication.

Assessment Score 5

**Command of spoken language is very good.**

- The production of language is fluent.
- Language is correct, varied and articulate; errors do not interfere with message.
- Intonation enhances communication.

## APPENDIX D

### PRE-ASSESSMENT READING FOR LESSON

#### 10 clichés que les jeunes ne veulent plus entendre (et ce qu'il faut rappeler)

##### **"Stereotypes that youth don't want to hear (and what you must remember)"**

##### 1. Tous les jeunes sont des geeks

*"Digital native... Certes, mais nous ne sommes pas H24 sur nos portables ou sur Facebook... Il y a même plein de jeunes qui n'ont ni smartphones, ni Facebook".*

##### 2. Les jeunes ont un gros problème avec l'autorité

*"Donc s'il y a beaucoup de chômage des jeunes, c'est un peu de leur faute parce qu'ils sont incapables de travailler pour un patron..."*

##### 3. Les jeunes sont individualistes

*"Cette génération a plutôt tendance à compter sur soi-même pour s'en sortir et moins sur le collectif. C'est davantage un côté self made man que l'idée d'être égoïste et de penser qu'il faille écraser les autres".*

##### 4. La jeunesse, une période où l'on prend des risques

Pas tout le temps, pas forcément, pas tout le monde ne le peut, même en étant jeune. De même d'autres peuvent prendre des risques, même plus âgés.

##### 5. Tous les jeunes picolent dès le jeudi soir

"Non, les jeunes ne sont pas tous en coma éthylique 3 fois par semaine"... Et ne sont pas, loin s'en faut, les seuls à boire sans modération.

Quel cliché sur les étudiants vous énerve le plus ? donnez votre avis !

6. Les jeunes de banlieue deal ou brûlent des voitures. "... et, si possible, tous avec des casquettes ou des cagoules"

7. Les jeunes ne sont pas engagés.

*"Beaucoup d'études montrent que l'engagement est en fait différent des générations précédentes. Les moins de 30 ans s'engagent peu dans les partis politiques, les syndicats ou les grosses structures associatives. Les jeunes privilégient un engagement de courte durée et sur un objectif atteignable rapidement. Par exemple, deux mois pour organiser un concert humanitaire et non un engagement à vie pour une cause".*

8. Des jeunes ont une sexualité débridée et un problème d'engagement

*"Le dossier de l'Express de l'année dernière "Jeunes et sexe, ce qu'ils vous cachent" par exemple. Si le prix était inversé et décernait les pires articles, celui-ci aurait été lauréat."*

9. Les jeunes votent massivement FN

*"Seuls 1/3 des jeunes votent. Donc, au mieux, une majorité de ce tiers vote Front National. Il reste donc les 2/3 des jeunes qui sont abstentionnistes plus tous ceux qui votent pour les autres partis".*

10. Il passe son bac à 15 ans

**Ne pas se limiter aux clichés dont sont victimes les jeunes.** *"Nous sommes un collectif d'association de jeunes donc nous travaillons sur les clichés qui nous concernent, mais nous sommes souvent interpellés sur le public senior, lui aussi victime de bien des clichés. Origine sociale et géographique, genre, religion... Le combat est un peu sans fin !" conclue Simon Berger.*

APPENDIX E  
PRE-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

**Interactive Oral Activity** (*Translated by researcher*)

In groups of two, identifying some of the embedded vocabulary from the text, respond to the following questions:

1. In reading the text which of these ten stereotypes about young people resonate with you the most?
2. Which other stereotypes that are not part of the list annoy you the most?

After responding, create and present a dialogue with your partner where you oppose each other's' ideas. You may present your activity in the form of a debate, casual conversation among friends, or dispute with a parent or other adult. Be prepared to answer and comment on questions from your other classmates to support or defend your ideas.

\*Please Follow Interactive Speaking Rubric for Assessment Criteria.

APPENDIX F  
STUDENT REFLECTION FORM

Name or Topic of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

**What did you like most about working on this project today?**

*(ex. Working in groups, creating the project, presenting ideas, exhibition, other...)*

**What did you like least about working on this project?**

**What strategies will you use in the future?**

**Briefly state something you learned about the language/culture today. (phrases, expressions, cultural topic, etc...)**

**How did you feel about your overall progress today?**

**Other comments:**

APPENDIX G  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

*Learning Process Reflection*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate each of the four question questions below using the following scale.

- 1. Not at all**
- 2. Little**
- 3. Normal**
- 4. More than normal**
- 5. A great deal**

**Sense of Value:**

*Compared to other learning activities in this class, how often did you feel like your work is useful?*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Level of Engagement:**

*Compared to other French assignments, please rate how engaged you were in this project?*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Awareness:**

*To what extent has your knowledge gained in class made you more aware of your decisions, including how well you choose to interact with others?*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Problem Solving:**

*To what degree has this activity caused you to become a more confident and creative problem solver?*

APPENDIX H  
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

*FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS*

1. Please tell me your name, grade level, and why you chose to take an elective French course. (Opening Question)
2. Tell me about your experience during the process of this unit. (Introductory/Key)
3. In what ways do you think that this activity differed from your other classroom experiences throughout the course of the semester? (Key)
4. What did you enjoy most about this activity? (Key)
5. What did you like least about this activity? (Key)
6. Describe any problems that you encountered throughout the project. (Key)
7. Describe your experience with your partner(s) and her/his participation throughout the activity. (Key)
8. Talk a little about your project and how you navigated through the experience. (Transition, Key)
9. Do you think that you spoke more or less during this activity than in other activities? Why or why not? (Transition, Key)
10. Do you have any additional comments about the activity? (Conclusion)



APPENDIX I  
INVITATION LETTER

**Invitation Letter:**

Dear \_\_\_\_,

My name is Tanner Tucker and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the effects on diverse teaching strategies and how they contribute to second language acquisition. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to continue the class in its normal routine and answer some questions about your experiences throughout the unit.

In particular, you will be asked questions about how the activity affected your motivation and interactive speaking abilities. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The research will take place during normal class hours. Following the study, you may be asked to participate in a small focus group that will be audio recorded and used for research purposes only. The recordings will only be reviewed by me and the members of the research team. No one else will have access to these files.

As this study is simply examining teaching techniques, there is no associated risk. Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the research site. If asked to participate in the focus group, others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise that what you say will remain completely private, but we will ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

Participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your grades in any way. If you begin the study and later decide to withdraw, you will still receive classroom credit for all associated activities.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at school at any time or reach me by e-mail. Should you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may also request more information at the University of South Carolina's Office of Research Compliance (803) 777-6670.

If you are willing to participate, please sign the associated document and return it to me as soon as possible. Thank you again for your consideration.

With kind regards,

S. Tanner Tucker